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ON YISRO - 5778

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**Rav Yissocher Frand - Parshas Yisro**  
**What Impressed Yisro the Most, and Why?**

The first pasuk of this week's parsha reads, "And Yisro, minister of Midian, father-in-law of Moshe, heard all that G-d did to Moshe and to Israel, His people – that Hashem took Israel out of Egypt." [Shemos 18:1] Rashi writes that Yisro heard about the splitting of the Reed Sea and the war with Amalek, and came. Rashi further quotes a Mechilta that infers from this pasuk that Yisro was impressed by two things: 1) all that Hashem did to Moshe and to Yisroel, His people and, 2) that Hashem took Yisroel out of Mitzraim. The Mechilta spells out what impressed Yisro regarding "all that G-d did to Moshe and to Israel": The descent of the manna; the well; and the battle with Amalek. However — the Mechilta adds — Yisro was most impressed "that Hashem took Israel out of Egypt."

Rashi repeats this idea in pasuk 9 — "Yisro rejoiced over all the goodness that G-d had done for Israel, that he rescued them from the hand of Egypt." Rashi says, "the goodness that G-d had done" refers to the manna and the well, but above all, he rejoiced "that He rescued (Israel) from the hand of Egypt." Rashi explains, in the name of the Mechilta: Up until this point, no slave was ever able to escape from Egypt, because the borders of the land were sealed, but now a nation of 600,000 adult males left! This impressed Yisro more than anything else.

Consider the following: What would impress us more, the miraculous splitting of the sea, receiving manna from Heaven, and the other miraculous acts Hashem performed for His people — or the fact that a nation of slaves escaped from their masters, despite the fact that such an event was unprecedented in the history of Egyptian slavery? Most people would respond that that which required suspension of the laws of nature was more impressive than that which "merely" represented an unprecedented socio-historic occurrence. Why, then, was Yisro so impressed with the fact that "He took Israel out of Egypt?" I saw an interesting answer to this question in the sefer Avir Yosef. In the Hagadah, toward the beginning of Maggid, the author writes: "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and if the Holy One, Blessed be He, had not taken us out from Egypt, we and our children and grandchildren would be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt." The obvious question is that, historically, this does not seem to be an accurate statement.

In the normal course of human society in the history of the world where a people was enslaved, eventually the slaves get their freedom. There were slaves in America, but 150 years ago, President Lincoln freed them. Perhaps he did not grant them total equality, but ultimately, other events took place which brought further changes in society, and the people whose grandparents were slaves ultimately gained full civil rights. This is a phenomenon that has happened time and again in countries throughout the world over thousands of years of history. Ultimately, that is what happens! So what does the Hagadah mean when it says that "had G-d not taken us out, then we and our children and grandchildren would still today be slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt"?

The Avir Yosef suggests the following answer: The reason Mitzraim was so successful in keeping their slaves trapped in the country was not because they had the highest fences, not because they had the most ferocious dogs at the border, and not because they had the most vicious policemen who kept the slaves under control. The reason no slave ever escaped from Mitzraim was because Mitzraim had this power of breaking the spirit of human beings such that they never even dared think about escaping. Their success was not in walls, dogs, towers or fences, or anything like that. Rather, they turned people into sub-humans who thought they had no rights, and who could not even dream of freedom. That is why no slave ever escaped from Mitzraim!

The Ribono shel Olam took a people who were downtrodden and depressed, and gave them life again. That is how we got out of Mitzraim, and that is what impressed Yisro more than anything else. Even greater than the miracle of changing the physical world — of having the sea split and having manna come down from heaven — is the miracle of changing the human spirit. This is what the author of the Hagadah is saying: Had the Almighty not given us the spirit of life (chiyus), and given us hope again, and made us human again, we and our children and our children's children would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Yisro is provided below:

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**Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky**

**The Inspiring Story**

The retelling of the events of yetzias Mitzrayim is always referred to as telling a story. Chazal speak of the individual who elaborates on the story of yetzias Mitzrayim as praiseworthy. In Parshas Yisro, Moshe doesn't merely tell Yisro about the miracles that had occurred, but rather Moshe tells Yisro the complete story. Rashi comments that the reason that Moshe chose this method of communication is because storytelling has the ability to draw the listeners' heart to the deeper message that the story is relating. Similarly, when we fulfill our obligation of telling the story of yetzias Mitzraim to our children on the night of the seder, our goal is to connect our children's hearts to our message. Moshe was interested in something tangible that would result from drawing Yisro's heart closer. Yisro would hopefully choose to convert and dedicate his life to the

service of Hashem Who had performed the miracles Moshe was relating to him. As we tell our children about those same miracles, we too hope to instill within them a sincere commitment to a lifetime of avodas Hashem.

Transforming the listening to a story into a practical commitment is the essence of the Hagaddah. The Rambam describes the mitzvah of telling the story to our children as having two components. One must elaborate upon the narrative of yetzias Mitzraim but this does not suffice to fulfill one's obligation. We are taught by Rabban Gamliel that one who does not mention the mitzvos of pesach, matzah, and marror has not fulfilled his obligation. The Rambam interprets this to mean that the mere telling of the story is not enough. We must connect the story to practice and emphasize that the halachic obligations of Pesach night are the conclusion of the story.

There is a dual relationship between the two aspects of sippur yetzias Mitzraim. Not only does the story influence one to take action, but performing actions also impacts on one's appreciation of the story itself. The Sefer Hachinuch, upon discussing reasons for mitzvos, mentions several times a fundamental principle that permeates the positive mitzvos we perform. One's heart is drawn after one's actions and therefore it is not sufficient to merely contemplate and discuss the truths of Torah. By eating matzah, we internalize the message of the matzah. This theme is true for all themitzvos. The message of Hashem as the Creator becomes a reality for us when we engage in the act of reciting kiddush. Hashem as our Protector is not just theoretical but takes on true meaning as we sit in the sukkah. Telling the story behind mitzvos leads to a greater appreciation of them which enhances their observance. In turn, greater commitment to actual performance of mitzvos enhances our appreciation of the Divine truths that the mitzvos represent.

There are two words that are used both in Parshas Bo and in Parshas Yisro that relate to yetzias Mitzraim and to matan Torah. The words "lehagid" and "leimor" both mean to tell, yet Chazal observe that there is a distinction between them. "Lehagid" refers to speaking in a stronger manner, whereas "leimor" has the connotation of a softer tone. Concerning yetzias Mitzraim in Parshas Bo, we are commanded "lehagid" and "leimor." So too, in Parshas Yisro, Moshe is instructed to introduce kabbolas HaTorah to the Jewish People using both of these terms. Both terms are used because there are two messages that must be conveyed. The softer word "leimor" is used for the story. The events of yetzias Mitzraim which are the prelude to kabbolas HaTorah are told in a soft tone that is used for a story to draw the hearts of the listeners. However, merely being inspired by a moving tale is not significant. A commitment to the rigorous life of mitzvah observance symbolized by the stronger form of speech "lehagid" must follow the "leimor." Eventually, a life dedicated to the "lehagid" of mitzvos in turn inspires us and we internalize the stories we once heard. As our appreciation of mitzvos matures, we continue on a life long journey of "leimor" and "lehagid," as our avodas Hashem merges the soft words of a story with the rigorous commitment to shemiras hamitzvos.

More divrei Torah, audio and video shiurim from Rabbi Sobolofsky

More divrei Torah on Parshas Yisro

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## Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

### YITRO

The high point of Jewish spiritual history is achieved in the narrative that is this week's Torah reading. The revelation at Sinai and the subsequent granting of the Torah to Israel defined the character and mission of the Jewish people throughout its long and eventful history. The basic ideas encompassed in the Ten Commandments have become the foundation of Western civilization. And,

even though they have often been challenged, they have never been refuted or ignored.

The universality of the message of the Torah is emphasized to us by the fact that the description of the Revelation at Sinai is preceded by the story of Yitro and his journey, both the physical and spiritual one, to join the Jewish people and share their fate and mission.

Jewish tradition tells us that Yitro had previously experimented with every form and device of paganism – the dominant religion of his time in the world – in order to find a sense of purpose and serenity for his soul and inner being. He found them all to be wanting in truth and in actuality and due to his honesty and intellectual acuity; he eventually came to reject them all.

He came to Jewish thought and behavior from the outside, from being one of the leading priests of paganism of his time. But in searching for the truth, he experienced his own inner revelation that coincided with the unique holy revelation at Sinai, as seen in this week's Torah reading. He would find it to be difficult to be an outsider coming into Israel but he would find it to be even more difficult to remain an outsider and ignore the apparent truth.

As is often the case, the outsider, so to speak, sees things more clearly than those intimately involved in a situation. There is an objectivity that an outsider can bring to bear on the circumstances at hand that are often lacking in those who are actually participating in the event.

Later on in the Torah, during the trek in the desert of Sinai, Moshe will say to Yitro: "you have been for us our eyes." By this statement Moshe implies that Yitro saw things even more clearly than did the Jewish people and that his appreciation of the greatness of Judaism and its Torah excelled above all.

Perhaps that is why there is an opinion amongst many of the commentators and in Midrash as well that the visit of Yitro to the encampment of Israel in the desert took place before the granting of the Torah.

When this great event happened, it was Yitro above everyone else who could most appreciate what this historic moment really meant in terms of world civilization and the progress of humankind. The Jewish people may have taken the Exodus from Egypt in stride, as being there due. Yet, Yitro reminded them of the supernatural quality of the event. The same is true regarding the revelation at Sinai and therefore Yitro merited that this portion of the Torah be named for him.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva

**Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit" a**

**On Tu Bishvat: A Clear Messianic Sign**

Q: When will the Messiah come?

A: It is known that our Sages rebuked one who engages in messianic calculations. "Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end" (Sanhedrin 97b)! They will announce the coming of the Messiah, but in vain, and the disappointment causes a horrible crisis of faith.

Q: So when the Messiah arrives we won't greet him?

A: This is a different question. After he arrives, we will know. The Rambam writes that we will not know these matters until they occur (Hilchot Melachim 12:2).. After they occur, however, we will know. When two students came and asked our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook "when will the Messiah come?", he responded with a smile: He has already arrived a little.

Q: What does "he has already arrived a little" mean? He either arrived or he didn't!

A: There is also a possibility that he will come "slowly, slowly" - gradually, in stages.

Q: If so, what is this "a little"?

A: This matter is explained by the prophet Yechezkiel. In an extremely special passage, he prophesied in the Name of Hashem to the mountains and the valleys.

Q: How is it possible to speak to mountains?

A: Why not? The Master of the Universe is concerned about the Mountains of Israel. The Shechina is distressed when the enemy rules over them. The Shechina is distressed when they are destroyed and desolate. The Shechina is distressed when they are mocked and scorned by the non-Jews. Therefore, when the time arrives, the Master of the Universe will act with great zealotry for the Land, and will decide that from now on these things will change and the non-Jews who are around will suffer their disgrace (Yechezkiel 36).

Q: That is to say, their lands will be desolate?

A: Actually no, rather our Land will bloom. "But you Mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people of Israel, for they will soon be coming" (Yechezkiel 36:8). If the Land is green, this is a sign that Hashem decided to bring salvation for His Nation. And blessed is Hashem, our Land is green both on this side of the 'Green Line' and on the other side.

Q: This verse is enough to signal the Redemption?!

A: This is what our Sages stated: "You have no Revealed End [clearer] than this, as it says: 'And you Mountains of Israel...'" (Sanhedrin 98a).

Q: Why the blooming of the desolate in particular? There are many other important matters.

A: But this is the first matter. "Not on bread alone does a man live" (Devarim 8:3), but bread is in fact essential. Rashi (Sanhedrin ibid.) explains: "When the Land of Israel will generously give her fruit then the End will approach". And soon will be established "for they will soon be coming". Jews are able to come, since there is food to eat.

Q: Is this the order of Redemption: first the establishment of agricultural settlements and afterwards the Ingathering of the Exiles?

A: Precisely. This is why the "Shemoneh Esrei" was fixed in its order. As our Sages taught: after the blessing over produce comes the blessing of the return of the exiles (Megillah 17b).

Q: If so, why aren't there the same reservations towards interpreting this sign as towards those who calculate the End?

A: This is not an End for which we wait passively, but rather an End which we create in our fulfillment of the Torah commandment of settling the Land. In this we are emissaries of the Holy One, Blessed be He.

Q: This means that we bring the coming of the Messiah?

A: Indeed. The Midrash of our Sages is known: If you are planting a sapling and they inform you that the Messiah is coming, plant first and greet him afterwards (Avot De-Rebbe Natan, Shechter Edition, chap. 1, version b). Is the Messiah not more important than a sapling? No - these are not two separate matters: by planting a sapling you will greet the Messiah!

Q: But one can claim that these are merely trees and agriculture, with no connection to the Messiah and his coming!

A: The Prophet came precisely because of this! Yechezkel is not talking about upper worlds, but about matters that everyone in this world can see: those trees, that agriculture. The difference is what they see in them: do they merely see trees, or do they see the shining light of the Redemption of Zion and a Divine command to redeem the Nation of Israel?

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### **Yitro: The Date of Matan Torah**

#### **Rav Kook Torah**

On what day was the Torah revealed to Israel?

The majority opinion is that the Torah was given on the sixth day of Sivan. Rabbi Yossi, however, disagreed, arguing that the Torah was given on the seventh of Sivan (Shabbat 86b).

What is the essence of this disagreement? What is the significance of the date of Matan Torah?

Perfecting Creation

Rav Kook explained that the Sages were debating the fundamental goal of the Torah. The sixth and seventh of Sivan correspond to the very first sixth and seventh days in history - the sixth and seventh day of Creation.

Most of the Sages associated the Sinai revelation with the sixth day of Creation, the day that mankind was created. This connection indicates that the primary objective of the Torah is to complete that act of Creation - the birth of humanity. The goal of Torah is to perfect humanity, to recreate it in a holier, purer form.

Rabbi Yossi, on the other hand, wanted to stress an even higher goal of the Torah. For after the Torah has made its mark on mankind and its ideals have been internalized in the human heart, it will then take root into the innermost soul of the world, uplifting and refining the entire universe.

In terms of this ultimate goal of the Torah, it is fitting that the Torah be revealed to the world on the seventh day, the concluding day of Creation. Through the seventh day, the Torah is linked to the true culmination of Creation - the Sabbath, the day of ultimate perfection and rest.

(Silver from the Land of Israel (now available in paperback). Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. IV on Shabbat 86b (9:17).)

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### **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

#### **The Bond of Loyalty and Love**

##### **Yitro 5778**

In the course of any life there are moments of awe and amazement when, with a full heart, you thank God shehecheyanu vekiyanu vehigyanu lazeman hazeh, "who has kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this day."

Two that particularly stand out in my own memory were separated by almost ten years. The first was the Lambeth Conference at Canterbury in 2008. The conference is the gathering, every ten years, of the bishops of the Anglican Communion - that is, not just the Church of England but the entire worldwide structure, much of it based in America and Africa. It is the key event that brings this global network of churches together to deliberate on directions for the future. That year I became, I believe, the first rabbi to address a plenary session of the conference. The second, much more recent, took place in October 2017 in Washington when I addressed the friends and supporters of the American Enterprise Institute, one of the world's great economic think tanks.

The two gatherings could not have been less alike. One was religious, Christian, and concerned with theology. The other was secular, American, and concerned with economics and politics. Both of them, though, were experiencing some kind of crisis. In the case of the Anglican Church it had to do with gay bishops.[1] Could the Church accommodate such people? The question was tearing the Church apart, with many of the American bishops in favour and most of the African ones against. There was a real sense, before the conference, that the communion was in danger of being irreparably split.

In Washington in 2017 the issue at the forefront of people's minds was quite different. A year earlier there had been a sharply divisive American Presidential election. New phrases had been coined to describe some of the factors involved - post-truth, fake news, flyover states, alt-right, identity politics, competitive victimhood, whatever - as well as the resurfacing of an old one: populism. It all added up to what I termed the politics of anger. Was there a way of knitting together the unravelling strands of American society?

The reason these two events are connected in my mind is that on both occasions I spoke about the same concept - the one that is central to this week's parsha, and to biblical Judaism as a whole, namely brit, covenant. This was, in the seventeenth century especially, a key concept in the emerging free societies of the West, especially in Calvinist or Puritanical circles.

To grossly simplify a complex process, the Reformation developed in different directions in different countries, depending on whether Luther or Calvin was the primary influence. For Luther the key text was the New Testament, especially the letters of Paul. For Calvin and his followers, however, the Hebrew Bible was the primary text, especially in relation to political and social structures. That is why covenant played a large part in the (Calvinist) post-Reformation politics of Geneva, Holland, Scotland, England under Cromwell, and especially the Pilgrim Fathers, the first European settlers in North America. It lay at the heart of the

Mayflower Compact (1620) and John Winthrop's famous "City upon a Hill" speech aboard the Arbella in 1630.

Over time however, and under the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the word "covenant" was gradually supplanted by the phrase "social contract." Clearly there is something similar between the two, but they are not the same thing at all. In fact, they operate on different logics and they create different relationships and institutions.[2]

In a contract, two or more people come together, each pursuing their self-interest, to make a mutually advantageous exchange. In a covenant, two or more people, each respecting the dignity and integrity of the other, come together in a bond of loyalty and trust to do together what neither can achieve alone.[3] It isn't an exchange; it's a moral commitment. It is more like a marriage than a commercial transaction. Contracts are about interests; covenants are about identity. Contracts benefit; covenants transform. Contracts are about "Me" and "You"; covenants are about "Us."

What makes the Hebrew Bible revolutionary in political terms is that it contains not one founding moment but two. One is set out in 1 Samuel 8, when the people come to the prophet Samuel and ask for a king. God tells Samuel to warn the people what will be the consequences. The king will take the people's sons to ride with his chariots and their daughters to work in his kitchens. He will take their property as taxation, and so on. Nonetheless, the people insist that they still want a king, so Samuel appoints Saul.

Commentators have long been puzzled by this chapter. Does it represent approval or disapproval of monarchy? The best answer ever given was provided by Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes, who explained that what Samuel was doing at God's behest was proposing a social contract precisely on the lines set out by Thomas Hobbes in *The Leviathan*. People are willing to give up certain of their rights, transferring them to a central power – a king or a government – who undertakes in return to ensure the defence of the realm externally and the rule of law within.[4] The book of Samuel thus contains the first recorded instance of a social contract.

However, this was the second founding moment of Israel as a nation, not the first. The first took place in our parsha, on Mount Sinai, several centuries earlier, when the people made with God, not a contract but a covenant. What happened in the days of Samuel was the birth of Israel as a kingdom. What happened in the days of Moses – long before they had even entered the land – was the birth of Israel as a nation under the sovereignty of God.

The two central institutions of modern Western liberal democracies are both contractual. There are commercial contracts that create the market; and there is the social contract that creates the state. The market is about the creation and distribution of wealth. The state is about the creation and distribution of power. But a covenant is about neither wealth nor power, but rather about the bonds of belonging and collective responsibility. As I put it in *The Politics of Hope*, a social contract creates a state. A social covenant creates a society. A society is the totality of relationships that do not depend on exchanges of wealth and power, namely marriages, families, congregations, communities, charities and voluntary associations. The market and the state are arenas of competition. Society is an arena of co-operation. And we need both.

The reason that the concept of covenant proved helpful to the Anglican bishops on the one hand, and the American Enterprise Institute on the other, is that it is the supreme example of a bond that brings together, in a single co-operative enterprise, individuals and groups that are profoundly different. They could not be more different than the parties at Mount Sinai: God and the children of Israel, the one Infinite and eternal, the other, finite and mortal.

In fact the very first human relationship, between the first man and the first woman, contains a two-word definition of covenant: *ezer ke-negdo*, meaning on the one hand "a helper" but on the other, someone "over-and-against." [5] In a marriage, neither husband nor wife sacrifice their distinctive identities. At Sinai, God remained God and the Israelites remained human. A symbol of covenant is the *havdalah* candle: multiple wicks that stay separate but produce a single flame.

So covenant allowed the Anglican Communion to stay together despite the deep differences between the American and African churches. The American covenant held the nation together despite, in Lincoln's day, a civil war, and at other times, civil and economic strife, and its renewal will do likewise in the

future. In Moses' day it allowed the Israelites to become "one nation under God" despite their division into twelve tribes. Covenants create unity without uniformity. They value diversity but, rather than allowing a group to split into competing factions, they ask each to contribute something uniquely theirs to the common good. Out of multiple Me's they create an overarching Us.

What made these two experiences in Canterbury and Washington so moving to me was that they showed how prophetic Moses' words were when he told the Israelites that the Torah and its commands "will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'" (Deut. 4:6). Torah continues to inspire not only Jews but all who seek guidance in hard times. So, if you find yourself in a situation of conflict that threatens to break something apart, whether a marriage, a family, a business, a community, a political party or an organisation, framing a covenant will help keep people together, without any side claiming victory or defeat. All it needs is recognition that there are certain things we can do together that none of us can do alone. Covenant lifts our horizon from self-interest to the common good. There is nothing wrong with self-interest. It drives economics and politics, the market and the state. But there are certain things that cannot be achieved on the basis of self-interest alone, among them trust, friendship, loyalty and love. Covenant really is a life- and world-changing idea. Shabbat Shalom,

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

**Drasha**

**By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

**Parshas Yisro**

Most Favored Nation

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.

Good Shabbos

Dedicated in memory of Esther Hammerman by Shayne and Marty Kessler

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from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

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subject: Torah Weekly

**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Yitro**

**For the week ending 3 February 2018 / 18 Shevat 5778**

**Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com)**

**Insights**

**Buried Treasure**

*"...And you will be to Me an 'am segula,' a treasured nation from all the nations, for all the world is Mine." (19:5)*

What is the connection between the first half of this sentence, "And you will be to Me a treasured nation from all the nations," and the second half: "for all the world is Mine"?

Our Sages teach, "G-d has nothing in His treasury except a storehouse of the Fear of Heaven." (Berachot 33) The Vilna Gaon comments that a treasury contains only things that are both valuable and are difficult to acquire.

Everything in this world is the Hand of Heaven; He already has everything. Everything, that is, save the Fear of Heaven itself, for that depends solely on individual free choice. Thus, in reality, G-d has nothing in His treasury of true value to Him except the storehouse of the Fear of Heaven.

"And you will be to Me an am segula..." Rashi interprets the adjective segula as meaning "a treasury". A treasured nation.

"For all the world is Mine." Being that the entire world already belongs to G-d, the only thing that is a treasure to Him is the Jewish People, who have chosen to fear Him.

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Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

**OU Torah**

**Yitro: Fathers-in-Law**

**Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**

Very much has been written about most family relationships. There are books about fathers and sons, fathers and daughters, and mothers and sons and daughters. Many volumes have been written about relationships, typically rivalrous, between siblings.

But comparatively, little has been written about the relationship between father-in-law and son-in-law. Often, admittedly, there is little or no relationship between them. But just as often the relationship is an important and rewarding one.

I know that I personally have benefited immeasurably from my relationship with my father-in-law, of blessed memory. As is most often the case, I did not know him at all until my young adulthood, when I began to date his daughter. Unlike the father-son relationship, the relationship between father-in-law and son-in-law

usually begins in maturity and is, therefore, more of a relationship between equals, more man to man.

My father-in-law modeled his relationship to me after the precious relationship he had with his father-in-law. He would often joke that whereas a father couldn't choose his son, he could choose a son-in-law, to which I would usually respond, "Yes, true, and a son cannot choose his father, but a son-in-law can choose his father-in-law."

In this week's Torah portion, Yitro, we read of a very rich relationship between a son-in-law, Moses, and his father-in-law, Yitro. Of course, we first read of their connection much earlier on in the book of Exodus. But in this week's portion, the relationship begins to sound much more familiar to those of us who have "been there".

Yitro travels to meet Moses and is the one who reunites Moses with his wife and children. They converse with animation and in great detail, each one narrating his story to the other. Moses narrates the story of the Exodus, of the splitting of the sea, and of the war with Amalek.

Yitro too tells a story, but it is a very different one. He tells of his religious quest, of his search for a God he can believe in. He informs Moses that he has dabbled in every conceivable type of idol worship. He has seen it all. And "now he knows" who the true God is.

Every son-in-law tells his father-in-law his story, although I suspect that often some of that story is suppressed. And every father-in-law, that is every father-in-law worth his salt, shares his narrative with the young man who requests his daughter's hand.

I remember telling my father-in-law some of my story. I remember some of the questions he asked me, and his disappointment when he discovered that I did not share his fascination with the game of chess.

But I can never forget the story he told me; not once, but throughout the more than forty years that we knew each other. His was a story of pre-Holocaust Eastern Europe, of a culture that is no more, a culture that he never ceased to mourn.

It is no wonder that the Torah characterizes the dialogue between Moses and Yitro by the word "vayesaper", which means to tell a story. Most relationships consist of stories told by one party to the other. In the case of the father-in-law and son-in-law relationship, these stories become essential and, at least in my case, were lifelong narratives.

Yitro models another essential aspect of this unique relationship: He offers counsel, he gives advice. Not that Moses asked for Yitro's opinion as to how he should conduct the judiciary system for his people. But Yitro assumed that it was his prerogative as a father-in-law to gently and constructively find fault in his son-in-law's approach to things and offer reasonable alternatives.

I number myself among those fortunate sons-in-law whose father-in-law did not hesitate to occasionally criticize him, but who did so lovingly. He offered wise and practical suggestions which indeed were often drawn from his own past and sad, personal experiences.

It has been pointed out that the Hebrew word for a son-in-law is chatan, a bridegroom. I am convinced that this is because in the relationship between son-in-law and father-in-law, the former always remains the young bridegroom and the latter, the sage elder.

In the end, Moses asks Yitro to remain with him, the ultimate tribute that a son-in-law can pay to his father-in-law.

I would like to close with an original thought, and if it is theologically daring, or in some other way off the mark, I beg the reader to forgive me.

It is a truism that God is our Father, and we are his sons and daughters. It strikes me that, in a certain way, God is also our Father-in-Law.

God as Father is the God with whom we began a relationship in our infancy.

God as Father-in-Law is the God whom we freely choose, sometimes repeatedly, at later stages of our lives.

God is also our Father-in-Law because we have taken, so to speak, His daughter as our bride. The Torah has been described, by prophets and rabbis, as God's daughter. And we, who have accepted the Torah, are betrothed to the daughter of God Himself. He entrusted His beloved princess to our inadequate and unreliable care.

But we asked for her hand. We accepted the Torah and committed ourselves to “doing and listening” to her words. If we are faithful to the Torah, we are demonstrating to our “Father-in-Law” that we deserve his daughter. Only then we can claim a close relationship to him, closer even than the relationship I had with my father-in-law, may he rest in peace.

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from: Torah in Action /Shema Yisrael <parsha@torahinaction.com>

subject: Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

**Shema Yisrael Torah Network**

**Peninim on the Torah - פרשת יתרו**

**Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**

**וישמע יתרו**

**Yisro heard. (18:1)**

The name of a *Parsha* is not arbitrary. It has been chosen by design, for a reason, for a purpose, to teach a lesson. This brings us to the name of our *parsha*: Yisro. Unquestionably, Yisro was an extraordinary human being: father-in-law of both Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Elazar ben Aharon *HaKohen Gadol* and the grandfather of Pinchas, who is Elyahu *HaNavi*. But do their relationships warrant that a *parsha* be named after him? It is not as if we have a *parsha* named for the Patriarchs, Yosef *HaTzaddik* or Aharon *HaKohen*. Veritably, our *parsha* is about *Mattan Torah*, the Giving of the Torah. Yisro is a prelude to the Torah, because a lesson about Torah learning can be derived from Yisro.

*Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*, explains that Yisro taught us two essential prerequisites to Torah study. First, *Vayishma* Yisro, “Yisro heard.” Did not everyone hear of the amazing miracles and wonders that Hashem wrought for His People? They heard – with their ears – not with their hearts. When Hashem told Shlomo *Hamelech* that He would grant him a wish, Shlomo asked for a *lev shomea*, “a heart that hears” (*Melachim* I 3:9). One who hears solely with his ears, hears superficially, as in “going in one ear and out the other.” If what we hear does not enter into our hearts, if we do not integrate what we hear into our being, then what we heard did not achieve its intended effect. Listening is insufficient. We must review, scrutinize and absorb what we have heard. Otherwise, it will soon dissipate.

Second, when Yisro heard, he immediately altered his lifestyle by picking himself up, packing everything, and leaving his home in search of the Jewish People. Only someone who truly seeks the truth, has the mettle to leave everything behind, his entire past, in pursuit of his goal. Yisro sought the truth. He searched through every religion, every dogma, and realized that the only truth was Judaism. It was this drive for the truth, this passion for spiritual integrity, coupled with a critical assessment of his discovery, that catapulted him to join *Klal Yisrael*. Had he been someone who listened without heart, accepted the superficial without truly assessing the veracity of its dogma, Yisro would have remained an idol worshipper in Midyan.

Thus, the Torah places Yisro’s story as a prelude to *Mattan Torah*, for us to deduce that these two traits are critical to Torah acceptance. In order to receive the Torah, one must hear with his heart. And an astute, thinking person who is truly in pursuit of the truth will undoubtedly arrive at the truth. Those who do not seem to “find it” are not really looking – or listening.

**וישמע יתרו...כי הוציא ד' את ישראל ממצרים**

**And Yisro heard...that Hashem had taken Yisrael out of Egypt. (18:1)**

Originally, Moshe *Rabbeinu* had taken his entire family with him to Egypt. Aharon *HaKohen* urged him to send them back to Midyan. His contention was very practical: The Jews in Egypt were already suffering; why should Moshe add to their number? Now, after hearing about all of the miracles, Yisro realized that the time had come for the family to be reunited. *Chazal* (*Midrash Rabbah*, *Shemos* 4:4) relate Moshe’s response to his brother’s admonishment. He said, “Tomorrow (in the near future), they (*Klal Yisrael*) will leave Egypt and stand at the foot of *Har Sinai*, where they will hear Hashem declare, *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, ‘I am Hashem, your G-d,’ and my sons will not hear – *k’mohem*, like them.”

*Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl*, observes that Moshe was underscoring the words “like them.” This means that, while it is true that his sons would experience the Revelation at *Har Sinai*, would be privy to hearing the first two *dibros*, commandments, directly from Hashem, they would not “hear,” experience the

Revelation on the same spiritual plane as *Klal Yisrael*. This is due to their not having experienced slavery as did *Klal Yisrael*. There is no comparison between listening to Hashem’s declaration after having just emerged from 210 years of suffering and misery and to being present as a spectator. Moshe wanted his sons to experience *Har Sinai* at its apex, something which only a slave could do. Thus, he wanted to bring them down to Egypt.

*L’fum tzara agra*, “The reward is commensurate with the pain,” is a well-known aphorism of the *Tanna*, Ben Hai Hai (*Pirkei Avos* 5:26). The reward for observing Hashem’s commandment is increased in proportion to the effect and discomfort one experiences in its performance. Idiomatically, it might suggest that success comes with a price. Here it means that the level of the *Har Sinai* experience increases with the level of slavery one suffers, because the more difficult the physical trek to the mountain, the greater the spiritual ascendancy one experiences when he arrives. All the pain will have been worth it when one sees the incredible reward.

While no one wants to feel pain, suffer loss, or experience disappointment, all too often, when attempting to avoid the inevitable, we become victims of emotional numbness. If one creates an environment in which he feels no pain, he will never understand the joy, the exuberance, of living, growing, succeeding. I saw an inspiring quote, “The bad part about being so numb is there will come a time when you will want to feel something, but you will not know how to.” When there is no experience of pain, there is no experience of joy.

How we react to pain also defines us. If we become immersed in the suffering and pain that we experience, we end up wallowing in self-pity and depression. People suffer, but, at a certain point, one must move on. We must attempt to use the pain as a springboard for opportunity, for building, for spiritual and emotional growth. Yosef *HaTzaddik* was viceroy over Egypt. As a result of his royal position, he did not participate in carrying the coffin of his father, Yaakov *Avinu*. As a result, when the Torah details the census (*Bamidbar* 1:32) and the division of *degalim*, banners, it writes: “For the sons of Yosef... for the sons of Ephraim.” It does not say: For the sons of Yosef, for Ephraim.” Yosef is moved aside as he is replaced with the sons of Ephraim. The *Baal HaTurim* explains that, since he did not carry his father’s coffin, the banner representing his *shevet*, tribe, is attributed in name to his son, Ephraim. Thus, the Torah writes, “To the sons of Ephraim.” True, as a king he simply could not participate, but... since he did not carry the coffin, he cannot gain the name of the banner. *L’fum tzara agra*.

Often times, it is very likely that the pain, the challenges and the problems that arise are really the solution for which we are waiting. With time and patience, we will see how everything turns out satisfactorily. The following story expresses this idea. There was an astrologer who claimed that he could foresee the future by reading the stars. The king had great respect for this astrologer and accepted all of his forecasts. As happens often, when one person finds favor in the eyes of the king, another advisor, usually someone who is quite insecure, becomes obsessed with envy and slanders the king’s favorite. An advisor told the king that his favored astrologer was a sham artist who was fabricating his forecasts. The king became angry. No one wants to be manipulated. The king had the astrologer picked up and, in no time, passed judgment to have him executed.

The astrologer was led outside and told to stand against the wall. The king said to the executioner, “When I give the signal, you will shoot.” The king then approached the astrologer and said, “You say that you know everything. Tell me, how are things with you right now?” The astrologer replied, “Things are far from good.”

“When do you think you will die?” the king asked.

“I do not know, but I do know that, whenever it will be, I will die exactly three days before the king,” the astrologer replied.

When the king heard this, he began to shudder with fright. Instead of signaling the executioner to kill the astrologer, he put him in charge of the man’s safety. It was vital that the astrologer be protected from all harm. The king felt that his life was bound up with that of the astrologer. The astrologer now realized that what he thought was a life-ending problem had actually become his salvation. He now had a full-time body guard to protect him from harm. We derive from here that the problems which seem to envelop us, which we fear will consume us, are

actually Hashem's way of solving what could have developed into a serious problem.

יהי ממחרת וישב משה לשפוט את העם

**It was on the next day that Moshe sat to judge the people. (18:13)**

Family is the most important unit in Judaism. It is the center of Jewish life. Indeed, the early collapse of traditional Judaism in this country, a collapse which led to the growth of the secular streams with their own brands of Jewish perspective, was followed closely afterwards by the collapse of the Jewish home. The traditional Jewish family had been secularized as a result of the powerful draw of assimilation. This led to the breakdown of the synagogue, and the rest is history. It is, therefore, amazing that Moshe *Rabbeinu* did not spend more time with his newly-arrived family from whom he had been separated for some time. I quote the following commentary from the *Abarbanel* (free translation):

“The Torah found it necessary to make known that Moshe sat down in judgment immediately, on the following day (after Yisro's arrival). For a number of days, he did not occupy himself with his father-in-law, his wife and sons. On the day of their arrival, he spent time with them, but, immediately, on the very next day, he returned to his position as leader. He spent the entire day, from early morning until late at night, in judgment. His primary focus was on his position as leader – not as husband, father, and son-in-law.”

Imagine this happening in contemporary society. One's wife and children arrive after a lengthy separation; the leader will most certainly take some time off to spend with his family. They need time to catch up, to talk about what has taken place in their individual lives. Moshe *Rabbeinu* was different. His focus was on *Klal Yisrael*. True, he had a family, but the members of *Klal Yisrael* were also his family and, as leader, he had a moral obligation to address their needs, to listen to their grievances, to soothe their nerves, to engender hope within them. That is the job of a leader. Personal time for personal issues was kept to a minimum. The nation came first.

זכור את יום השבת לקדשו ... לא תענה ברעך עד שקר

**Remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it ... You shall not bear false witness against your fellow. (20:8-13)**

The *Midrash Rabbah* (47:6) teaches that the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, were written side by side, five on each tablet. Thus, the injunction to observe *Shabbos Kodesh* stands opposite/next to the prohibition against false testimony. A Jew who observes *Shabbos* attests that the world was created by Hashem's utterance. When one bears false testimony, he corrupts his speech, which leaves him unable to testify that Hashem created the world. (He created it, then He rested on the Seventh Day. *Shabbos* attests to this verity.) Truth is the force that keeps the world alive, while falsehood is destructive. One who prevaricates cannot possibly provide testimony about *Shabbos*. This means (I think) that, while one can observe *Shabbos* – for himself, it does not necessarily mean that his observance serves as testimony. Thus, such a person's observance lacks the ability to inspire others to observe. The *Zera Shimshon* underscores every Jew's connection to *Shabbos* as a witness to the creation of the world. This places an added responsibility of *Shabbos* observance. First, it is a *mitzvah*. Second, it is our testimony attesting to Hashem as Creator of the world. A Jew who observes *Shabbos* makes a powerful statement: “I attest to the fact that Hashem created the world.”

Rabbi Nachman Seltzer relates a story within a story concerning *Shabbos*, which emphasizes the Jew's partnership with Hashem in the creation of the world. A *Chassidic* Jew once came to the *Rebbe* for a *brachah*, blessing. He was going through a difficult period, and he and his wife were facing a tremendous test from Heaven concerning their infant son. As soon as the *Chassid* entered his *rebbe's* chamber, he burst out in bitter and painful sobbing. The *Rebbe* waited as the man cried himself out. Once he regained control of himself, he began to speak. His young son lay curled up in bed deathly ill... The doctor had just about given up hope. From a medical point of view, the child had no chance of recovery. The man left his wife at the hospital to await what the doctor claimed was the inevitable, while he went to his *Rebbe*.

The *Rebbe* listened to his *chassid's* tale of woe. He did not just listen, he hung on every word. When the *chassid* finished speaking, the *Rebbe* kept silent for a few moments, then said, “Do you think that I can just issue a blessing and Hashem grants me my every wish? It does not work that way at all!” But, the

*Rebbe* continued, upon seeing the crestfallen face of his *chassid*, “There is one time every week when this is not so. Hashem created the world in six days and rested on *Shabbos*. On the holy day of *Shabbos*, we become partners with Hashem in Creation. On *Shabbos*, there is a special *koach*, power, granted for a Jew to ask Hashem's favor. After all, in our role as partner, we may make certain requests – such that we would never dream of asking during the week. So, go on home, and you can be certain that, this *Shabbos*, I will *daven*, pray, for your child, imposing on the special partnership we Jews all have with Hashem on this special day.”

I write this story because it impacted me greatly. Who does not have a “shopping list” for Hashem? Who does not have that one *bakashah*, request, that keeps gnawing at him, that controls his life, and is on his mind every waking moment? For some, it is health, personal or family; others require *parnassah*, a livelihood; yet others have issues with children/siblings and people in general. Now we know that *Shabbos* is an *eis ratzon*, special time when our prayers are heard. Like everything else, however, there is a catch: one must be *Shabbos* observant. This means that one's level of *Shabbos* observance has to be paradigmatic of a testimony about Hashem as Creator of the world. Who is prepared to say that his observance can tolerate such scrutiny? While we all observe the prohibitions, do we honor and sanctify *Shabbos* appropriately? Do we dress the part; go to *shul* on time; make *Shabbos* meals that include Torah thoughts and *zemiros*? Yes, all of this is part of positive *Shabbos* observance. The manner in which we observe *Shabbos* defines our attitude towards *Shabbos*: is it a drag, a day off, or a day of spiritual advancement?

Rabbi Seltzer relates another *Shabbos* story, which I feel is most meaningful and, regrettably, relates in some manner to many of us. A *chassid* once came to his *Rebbe* with a heavy heart. “*Rebbe*,” he cried, “my business is suffering. Day after day, I am losing money. I cannot turn a profit. If it goes on like this much longer, I will be bankrupt.”

The *Rebbe* looked at the *chassid* and asked, “Tell me, do you ever discuss your business on *Shabbos kodesh*?” This is a question that no one wants to be asked, since we are not on the spiritual level of entering into *Shabbos Kodesh* as if it were an island in time, with our minds totally devoted to spiritual elevation. The *chassid* trembled as he replied, “*Rebbe*, I am almost never home during the week. The only time that I have to speak with my wife is on *Shabbos*. Yes, invariably, there have been times that my conversation gravitated toward my business. It is not as if this was the original intent of the conversation, but, during the course of an extended, relaxed meal, business does invariably enter the subject matter of our conversation.” The *Rebbe* listened, then looked his *chassid* in the eye and said, “If you will be *mekabeil*, accept upon yourself, that from here on in you will never talk about your business on *Shabbos*, then I can guarantee that your business will prosper as it did before.”

I write this story because it affects us all. Our *Shabbos* observance is more than just a *kiyun mitzvah*, fulfillment of Hashem's command. When we observe *Shabbos* we are offering testimony that Hashem created the world. When we observe *Shabbos*, our spiritual comportment has to reflect the type of demeanor that one who is a partner with Hashem in the creation of the world would exhibit. Thus, when we act in such a manner, we have the “right” and “opportunity” to ask Hashem, our “Partner,” for His blessing. It is as simple as that!

כבד את אביך ואת אמך למען יאריך ימך

**Honor your father and mother, so that your days will be lengthened. (20:12)**

The *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, were inscribed on two tablets. Hence, the name: *Luchos*. The Ten Commandments are divided equally with: five devoted to *mitzvos bein adam laMakom*, between man and G-d; and five devoted to *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro*, between man and his fellow man. Interestingly, the *mitzvah* of *kibud av v'eim*, honoring one's father and mother, is listed on the tablet dedicated to *bein adam laMakom*. *Chazal* (*Kiddushin* 30b) teach that, when one properly honors his parents, it is considered as if he has honored Hashem. This is probably due to the fact that they “partner” with Hashem in the conception and birth of a child.

*Horav Avraham Pam*, *zl*, would cite the *Midrash* (*Bereishis Rabbah* 68:6) concerning Yaakov *Avinu's* leaving home, due to his fear of Eisav and because the time had come to search for a wife. On the way, Elifaz, son of Eisav, attacked him and left him penniless. This was followed by Yaakov's continuing

on to the home of the deceitful Lavan, the man who would be his father-in-law. Despite these hindrances, which would have impeded the goal of a lesser man, Yaakov moved on and established the underpinnings of *Klal Yisrael*.

How did he do it? From where did he garner the strength to overcome these trying situations? The *Midrash* explains that it was the knowledge that, “If I give up now, all of the efforts that my mother expended to assist me in obtaining the *brachos*, blessings, from my father will have been for naught.” Rivkah *Imeinu* made many sacrifices for her son, Yaakov. She risked her marriage and, quite possibly, her life, to guide Yaakov in the ruse to receive his rightful blessings. It was all so that Yaakov would derive the spiritual benefits of those blessings. How could Yaakov turn his back on his mother; how could he fail her? It was this sense of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude, based upon a profound acknowledgement of the favor – and everything that went into its realization – that spurred Yaakov on later in life.

We all have obligations to our parents (and to our mentors). How often do we take the time to begin to contemplate our *chov kadosh*, holy obligation, to honor our parents in the manner they deserve? The *mitzvah* of *kibbud av v’eim* is a command from Hashem, which is not contingent upon one’s feelings of gratitude. It is just so much more “meaningful” when one feels a reciprocal responsibility. One who does not experience a feeling of gratitude might very well be expressing a personal deficiency of his own. Certainly, we find numerous families in which grown children act indifferently toward their parents as a result of a son or daughter’s deficient character and self-serving attitude toward life in general, and parents in particular.

Maintaining a strong sense of gratitude toward parents, to the point that one would never let them down as he goes through life, is a task which defines one’s achievement. We should never forget upon whose shoulders we stand. *Horav Yisrael Meir Lau, Shlita*, former Chief Rabbi of Israel, never forgot his mother’s last minute gesture. He went through his teenage and early adult life without uttering the word *Mameh*, until, out of deep respect and admiration for his mother-in-law, he began to call her *Mameh*. The last time that he had pronounced this word was when he was seven years old. At the last fraction of a second, his mother pushed him into the arms of his eighteen year old brother, as she realized with a mother’s intuition that this was the only way to save him.

It was at the train platform in his hometown of Piotrkow, and the accursed Nazis were dividing up the “passengers,” men going to one side and women and children to another. Young Yisrael Meir was small in build; thus, his mother was able to cover him up with an oversized pillow on which she had sewn several straps. In reality, it was a makeshift duffle bag. His mother told him always to hold onto the pillow, because it was his satchel containing his worldly belongings.

Standing by the train, his mother realized the consequences of male/female separation. The women and children were being sent to death camps, while the men would be spared, so that they could work until it was their time to be sent away. With the pillow on his shoulders, the young boy was covered and unnoticeable. He was holding on to his mother’s hand, while his older brother stood to the side. His mother was directed toward a railcar, and Yisrael Meir thought that he was joining her. At the very last moment, his mother made an instantaneous decision. She shoved him (with the pillow on his shoulders covering him) in the direction of the men. The young boy had no idea what was happening. He heard his mother scream to his brother, “Take Lulek (Yisrael)! Goodbye, Lulek!” and he never saw his mother again.

Mother and son had no time for conversation, no hugs and kisses, no tearful embrace – just a wave, as the Nazis shoved her into the train. His brother did not understand. What would he do with a child, a seven year old boy? Yisrael Meir went into the rail car with the men (He was covered with the pillow, thus unnoticeable.) It was the most difficult moment of the war for him. He never before and never after cried as did on that day that he was separated from his mother. It took years to understand his mother’s sacrifice. By pushing him away, she saved his life. He never forgot this act of courage. His mother’s memory never left him. Indeed, he views this act of heroism as the shoulders upon which he has stood his whole life.

*Dedicated in loving memory of our dear mother and grandmother,*

*Leona Genshaft - לאה בת רפאל הכהן עה - נפטרה לזו שבט תשע -  
by her family - Neil and Marie Genshaft, Isaac and Naomi*

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***Kiddush B’makom Seudah***

*Insights into Halacha*

*For the week ending 7 February 2015 / 18 Shevat 5775*

***Rabbi Yehuda Spitz***

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[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 Nitronai Gaon (Shu't Hagoanim, 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 Hagoanim), 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 reviis), aside for the one drunk as Kiddush, must be drunk as the Seudah.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[20] Shu"t Salmas Chaim (old print vol. 1: 59; new print Orach Chaim 255) and Shu"t Teshuvos V'Hanhagos (vol. 1: 264). This is similar to Rav Yosef Eliyahu Henkin's assessment (Shu"t Gevuros Eliyahu vol. 1: 83 s.v. umatzinu) of why one who makes Kiddush as part of davening in shul is not yotzei and nevertheless needs to make Kiddush again at his Seudah at home. Rav Henkin explains that 'lo yotzei' 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).

Disclaimer: This is not a comprehensive guide, rather a brief summary to raise awareness of the issues. In any real case one should ask a competent Halachic authority. L'iluy Nishmas the Rosh HaYeshiva - Rav Chonoh Menachem Mendel ben R' Yechezkel Shraga, Rav Yaakov Yeshaya ben R' Boruch Yehuda, and l'zchus for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam and her children for a yeshua teikef u'miyad!

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