

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT YITRO · 17 SHVAT 5774 - JAN. 18, 2014 · VOL. 21 NO. 17

PARSHA INSIGHTS

TAKING OFF YOUR GLOVES

You hurry down the platform. You have to take the next train out of town. The train whistles. It's about to leave. To open the door of the carriage you need to remove your glove. As you do so, the glove slips from your grasp, floats neatly between the bottom of the train and the platform, and lands on the track. There's nothing you can do. Either you lose the train and save the glove, or lose the glove and catch the train.

What would you do? Miss the train and save the glove? Or save the glove and miss the train? Well, this is what one of the great figures of the Mussar movement did:

He took off his other glove and threw it under the track.

If you look in the written Torah you'll be hard pressed to find a single mention of the word 'rights'. Obligations – of these, the Torah is full. Obligations of a master to a slave; the obligations of a child to its parents; of a pupil to his teacher and vice versa; of a community to the poor; of the individual to the community; obligations to the orphaned, to the sick,

to the convert; the obligations of man to G-d. 'Rights', however, are something that the Torah hardly mentions. Why?

You can construct a legal system that spells out people's rights ("...all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights...") or you can write a code, like the written Torah, that spells out their obligations. You'll get to the same place. The end result will be the same because to the extent that you have obligations you don't need rights, and vice versa. The end result will be the same.

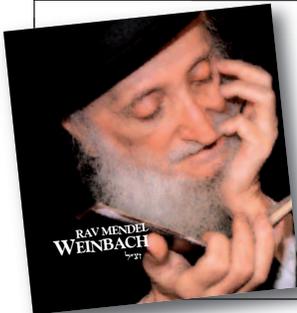
With one big difference.

If you base a system of law on rights you turn people into takers; if you base it on obligations you turn them into givers.

The Torah wants to create a nation of givers, a nation who will throw the other glove under the train so the person who finds it will have another to complete the pair.

Author's note: If anyone is familiar with the "glove" story and can let me know who this was, please email me at [yas-inclair@gmail.com](mailto:yasinclair@gmail.com) – thank you.

A Memorial Tribute on the First Yahrzeit



THE MEMORIAL TRIBUTE BOOK FOR RAV WEINBACH ZT"l

is available in print at Ohr Somayach* as well as in PDF format on www.ohr.edu

* Suggested minimum donation for the printed version is 36 nis.

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OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

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Love of the Land, written by Rav Mendel Weinbach, zt"l • Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

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Hearing of the miracles G-d performed for *Bnei Yisrael*, Moshe's father-in-law Yitro arrives with Moshe's wife and sons, reuniting the family in the wilderness. Yitro is so impressed by Moshe's detailing of the Exodus from Egypt that he converts to Judaism. Seeing that the only judicial authority for the entire Jewish nation is Moshe himself, Yitro suggests that subsidiary judges be appointed to adjudicate smaller matters, leaving Moshe free to attend to larger issues. Moshe accepts his advice. *Bnei Yisrael* arrive at Mt. Sinai where G-d offers them the Torah. After they accept, G-d charges Moshe to instruct the people not to approach the mountain and to prepare for three days. On the third day, amidst thunder and lightning, G-d's voice emanates

from the smoke-enshrouded mountain and He speaks to the Jewish People, giving them the Ten Commandments: 1. Believe in G-d, 2. Don't worship other "gods", 3. Don't use G-d's name in vain, 4. Observe Shabbat, 5. Honor your parents, 6. Don't murder, 7. Don't commit adultery, 8. Don't kidnap, 9. Don't testify falsely, 10. Don't covet.

After receiving the first two commandments, the Jewish People, overwhelmed by this experience of the Divine, request that Moshe relay G-d's word to them. G-d instructs Moshe to caution the Jewish People regarding their responsibility to be faithful to the One who spoke to them.

Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT YITRO

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

This Parsha describes the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, the culmination of the narrative of the Exodus from Egypt. Abarbanel poses a seemingly simple but yet important question: Why didn't G-d give the Torah much sooner in history, to Adam or Noach or at least to one of the Patriarchs?

In regard to the first question Abarbanel offers three perspectives. Firstly, the Torah had to be given to a large congregation of people that constituted an entire nation. Even though Adam and Noach observed the universally applicable Noachide laws and the Patriarchs observed the commandments of the Torah prophetically even before they were given, they did so only as individuals with a personal intellectual and prophetic connection to the will of G-d. Additionally, according to Kabbalistic thought, the 600,000 men between the ages of 20 and 60 present at Sinai constituted all the different character types in the totality of Mankind. In effect then, the Torah, although it was only directly given to one distinct nation, was in a sense transmitted to all of Mankind.

Secondly, the monumental task of receiving and transmitting the vast scope of the Torah and ensuring that it would be accepted by the nation could only be achieved through Moshe. Although the Jewish nation produced hundreds of prophets, Moshe stood alone, unique in the history of Mankind. That uniqueness can be characterized as follows: 1) Maturity at an early age and physical strength undiminished by age. 2) Total control over his physical desires. 3) The wisdom to understand almost completely the nature of G-d's total creation. 4) A spiritual make-up that allowed him

to receive prophecy at any moment, unlike any other prophet. 5) Since he had led the nation out of Egypt and fought battles and performed miracles on their behalf, it was fitting that only he transmit the Torah. 6) He combined all the positive characteristics of the Jewish People into one individual: royalty, priesthood, scholarship, material and spiritual accomplishment. 7) Most importantly, the nature of his prophecy was unlike any other. He received his prophecies when fully conscious. They were never shrouded in metaphors, images visions or dreams. His prophecies came in the most directly manner. This is what is meant by the fact that he spoke with G-d 'face to face.'

Thirdly, in order to emphasize the fundamental difference between Torah Judaism and all other religious beliefs and philosophies, the giving of the Torah had to be a clearly miraculous Divine intervention. It was the culmination of the Exodus, from the plagues to the splitting of the sea and the destruction of the Egyptian army, to the miraculous manna from Heaven, to the victory over Amalek, and finally to the thunder, lightning, smoke and fire that surrounded the mountain itself.

** Editor's note: The Abarbanel on this week's Torah portion also poses another fascinating question: Why did G-d choose to give the Torah specifically at Mount Sinai? Why not give it when the people were in Egypt, or in the Land of Israel, perhaps on the very spot where the Temple would be built? The Abarbanel provides an insightful answer to this question; and we invite you to visit us at Ohr.edu for an in-depth treatment of this subject.*

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Yitro had 7 names. Why was one of his names *Yeter*?
2. News of which two events motivated Yitro to come join the Jewish People?
3. What name of Yitro indicates his love for Torah?
4. Why was Tzipora with her father, Yitro, and not with Moshe when *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt?
5. Why does verse 18:5 say that Yitro came to the desert — don't we already know that the *Bnei Yisrael* were in the desert?
6. Why did Moshe tell Yitro all that G-d had done for the Jewish People?
7. According to the *Midrash* quoted by Rashi, how did Yitro respond when he was told about the destruction of Egypt?
8. Who is considered as if he enjoys the splendor of the *Shechina*?
9. On what day did Moshe sit to judge the Jewish People?
10. Who is considered a co-partner in Creation?
11. "Moshe sat to judge the people, and the people stood before Moshe...." What bothered Yitro about this arrangement?
12. Why did Yitro return to his own land?
13. How did the encampment at Sinai differ from the other encampments?
14. To whom does the Torah refer when it uses the term "*Beit Yaakov*"?
15. How is G-d's protection of the Jewish People similar to an eagle's protection of its young?
16. What was G-d's original plan for *Matan Torah*? What was the response of the Jewish People?
17. How many times greater is the "measure of reward" than the "measure of punishment"?
18. How is it derived that "Don't steal" refers to kidnapping?
19. In response to hearing the Torah given at Sinai, how far backwards did the Jewish people retreat in fear?
20. Why does the use of iron tools profane the altar?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 18:1 - Because he caused a parsha to be added to the Torah. *Yeter* means addition.
2. 18:1 - The splitting of the sea and the war against Amalek.
3. 18:1 - Chovav.
4. 18:3 - When Aharon met Moshe with his family on their way down to Egypt, Aharon said to Moshe: "We're pained over the Jews already in Egypt, and you're bringing more Jews to Egypt?" Moshe, hearing this, sent his wife and children back to Midian.
5. 18:5 - To show Yitro's greatness. He was living in a luxurious place; yet he went to the desert in order to study the Torah.
6. 18:8 - To draw Yitro closer to the Torah way of life.
7. 18:9 - He grieved.
8. 18:12 - One who dines with Torah scholars.
9. 18:13 - The day after Yom Kippur.
10. 18:13 - A judge who renders a correct decision.
11. 18:14 - Yitro felt that the people weren't being treated with the proper respect.
12. 18:27 - To convert the members of his family to Judaism.
13. 19:2 - The Jewish People were united.
14. 19:3 - The Jewish women.
15. 19:4 - An eagle carries its young on top of its wings to protect them from human arrows. So too, G-d's cloud of glory separated between the Egyptians and the Jewish camp in order to absorb Egyptian missiles and arrows fired at the Jewish People.
16. 19:9 - G-d offered to appear to Moshe and to give the Torah through him. The Jewish People responded that they wished to hear the Torah directly from G-d.
17. 20:6 - 500 times.
18. 20:13 - Since it is written immediately after "Don't murder" and "Don't commit adultery," it is derived that "Don't steal" refers to a crime carrying the same penalty as the first two, namely, the death penalty.
19. 20:15 - They backed away from the mountain twelve *mil* (one *mil* is 2000 cubits).
20. 20:22 - The altar was created to extend life; iron is sometimes used to make weapons which shorten life.

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YOMA 72 - 78

“If a person learns Torah for l’shma (“for its sake” and not for ulterior motives) and fulfills the Torah — the Torah becomes a crown for that person. But if he not worthy of doing this, the Torah becomes “a stranger” to him.”

This statement is found on our *daf* in the name of the Sage Rabbi Yochanan. He derives this teaching from the apparent contradiction between the way the word “zer” of the *Aron* that contained the Torah is written “zar”, without a “yud”, and the way it is pronounced as “zeir”, as if there was a “yud”, since the vowelization is with a “tzerei”. Rabbi Yochanan states that this variance shows the dual nature of Torah study and observance. If a person studies for positive reasons and fulfills what he learns, the Torah is a crown for him (“zeir” as it is pronounced). But if not, it is a “stranger” (“zar”) and he will forget it. (Rashi)

• Yoma 72b

“Any talmid chacham (Torah scholar) whose inside is not like his outside is not a talmid chacham.”

Rava learns this from the verse which refers to the *Aron* with gold, both on the inside and the outside. The Maharsha elaborates on the source for Rava’s teaching. The other vessels in the Mishkan that were gold-plated — such as the Shulchan and the Golden Altar — were golden only where visible — i.e. the outside. The *Aron*, however, was coated with gold also on the inside (see Ex. 25:11).

Therefore a person learning Torah (which the *Aron* represents) needs to be “golden” and pure from impropriety not only when in public but also when he is by himself in private — inside and out. Only then is he a true *talmid chacham*. (Meiri)

• Yoma 72b

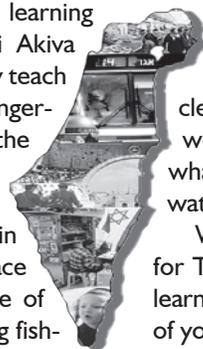
LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

THE FOX AND THE FISH

When the Romans decreed that anyone learning Torah would be put to death, Rabbi Akiva defied the ban and continued to publicly teach Torah. Papus ben Yehuda criticized him for endangering himself and his students by thus ignoring the power of the Roman rulers to punish them.

“I will give you a parable,” replied the great Sage. “A fox was once walking alongside a river in which fish were frantically scurrying from one place to another. When he asked them for the cause of their flight they explained that they were escaping fishermen who were trying to catch and kill them. The fox



suggested that they would be safe from danger if they joined him and all other animal life on dry land. To which the fish replied that the fox, reputed to be the cleverest of animals, was speaking utter foolishness. If they were so endangered in their natural habitat, they argued, what chance would they have for survival outside the water?”

We Jews, concluded Rabbi Akiva, face the same situation for Torah is to us what water is to the fish. If while we are learning Torah, of which it is written “It is your life and length of your days,” we are in danger, what chance do we have for survival if we abandon it?

OVERLOOKING OTHERS' LITTER

From: Miriam

Dear Rabbi,

We have neighbors in our building who unfortunately have a seriously disabled child. While I empathize with the family and how hard it must be for them, the child litters the building considerably. Since this is communal space that we all pay to keep clean, I would expect the family to regularly clean up after the child, which I imagine they do in their own home, rather than waiting for the weekly cleaning of the building. Should I convey this to the family, and if so, how?

Dear Miriam,

This is a very sensitive topic. First, let's pray for the well-being of the child and for the emotional and financial well-being of the family, which I'm sure they need in order to care for the child.

As you suggest, they're most likely aware of the problem, as they surely have to clean up after the child in their own home.

So if they nevertheless leave the litter in the building it must be that it's very difficult for them, for whatever reason, to regularly clean up after him there. This might be out of embarrassment, lack of time or energy, or perhaps even subconsciously to make note of their plight.

One might suggest that they pay for a second cleaning

during the week, but given the great expense they must already have in caring for the child's needs, this could be too much of a burden on them, as well as being embarrassing – unless the other tenants agreed to pay for another cleaning themselves, attributing the need to the children of the building in general.

However, I recommend not saying anything to the family about it at all. I understand that the litter must bother you, particularly since it's in an area others pay to clean. But their situation is just too sensitive and difficult to judge without knowing personally what it's like, G-d forbid.

Rather, I suggest that you transform the discomfort you feel over the litter into ways of serving G-d. For one, it should be a regular reminder for you to thank G-d for having healthy children, being challenged by this child alone out of your home, rather than it being your own child in your own home. In addition, the regular anguish you feel over the situation should be channeled into a regular opportunity to empathize with the family and pray for the welfare of the child and for that of the family and their ability to care for him or her.

Another thing to consider is that we too "litter" our environs with all types of improper thoughts, speech and actions; yet we neglect cleaning up after ourselves and expect G-d to overlook the messes we make. Therefore, we should also overlook the shortcomings we find in others and rather use such opportunities to correct and improve ourselves instead.

NEW!

"The Talmud Navigator"

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What is Ohr Somayach's new and innovative feature for assisting everyone to learn, analyze and remember the Talmud? Especially helpful for those learning Daf HaYomi! **Talmud Navigator – "Excel" in Talmud**

The Talmud, often referred to as "The Sea of the Talmud", is vast both in breadth and depth. The *gemara* (Megillah 18b) describes the difficulty of maintaining a hold on all the Torah you learn, quoting Proverbs (23:5): "When you lift (or close) your eyes from it – and it disappears".

Chazal (Eruvin 54b) prescribe a method for gaining a true understanding and making a lasting acquisition of all the material you learn. Rav Chisda is quoted as saying, "The Torah can only be acquired with signs."

Talmud Navigator is an attempt to organize the Talmud in database form, mapping and charting the Talmud by tagging the various components and building blocks of the according to type and hierarchy. It is based on the system outlined by the Ramchal in

Derech Tvunos.

This system of textual organization serves as a self-help way to outline the *sugya* in a clearer fashion. It assists in promoting a better understanding of the flow of the *Gemara* and in facilitating summary and review. It is also an excellent tool for a less advanced *Gemara* learner to identify and grasp the logical flow and interconnections of its various components.

Each Thursday we will post a PDF file which maps the *gemara* studied in that week's *Daf Yomi* cycle. G-d willing, we plan in the future to make available the Excel file which enables the user to make his own condensed selections of the *Gemara*. For example: Highlighting the main statements, arguments, questions, conclusions or personalized anchor points of the *sugya* determined by the learner to facilitate his own review.

Talmud Navigator is prepared by Rabbi Hanoach Zweig and is available at www.ohr.edu

ONE FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL

The prayers of the Jewish People stand at the pinnacle of the world. (Talmud Berachot 6b)

As we begin our day with the morning blessings, followed by the daily sacrifices and verses of praise to the Almighty, we undertake a spiritual journey ascending to the higher realms, culminating with the recital of the *Shemoneh Esrei*.

What is the purpose of this journey?

Although the language of the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer consists primarily of requests relating to our physical needs, this is only according to the simple level of understanding. In fact, the Zohar goes as far as to criticize a worshiper who prays only for his own physical needs, comparing him to a barking dog saying, "Give me, give me." Of course, one can, and should, include his own needs in his prayers; the criticism applies mainly when one thinks only of himself.

How do we achieve selfless prayer?

On a deeper level our prayers are designed to impact the spiritual realms above. The inner purpose of our prayers is to help facilitate the channeling of an influx of new Divine light and flow from G-d into the world, resulting in blessing and abundance. Within the holy words of our prayers lie the keys to the universe.

When praying, one should consider the soul within, asking for one's spiritual needs - like success in Torah learning or in praying properly. The next step in achieving selfless prayer is to place both the physical and spiritual needs of others before one's own. This includes praying for individuals who are in need as well as for the Jewish People at large.

And yet the loftiest and most praiseworthy of all prayers is when one puts his own misfortunes aside and anguishes instead over the suffering of the Divine Presence (*Shechinah*), which is exiled along with us. For the truly righteous, praying for the world's long-awaited redemption is of utmost importance, since only then will G-d's name and kingship be complete.

There is a hint to the above concepts in the words of Hillel the Elder: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I?" The implication is as follows: One must turn to G-d and pray for his own needs. For if he does not do so, then who will? However, to pray only for one's own needs would be considered selfish. Accordingly, such a prayer may be rejected. Instead one should include requests for others together with his own. This type of selfless prayer will likely arouse G-d's mercy, bringing about salvation to all in need.

STRINGS OF THE SOUL

Shamir Khaitov
Hunter College
Major: Psychology
JLE alumnus

Between emigrating from Uzbekistan and attending public school, Shamir's Jewish education was slim to none, leaving his Judaism hanging by a shoestring by the time he went to high school. G-d sent him a few more strings to hold onto once he joined a local *yeshiva's* nightly outreach Torah learning program: Talmud, laws of Shabbat, and a pair of *tzitzit* from the rabbi.

When Shamir came home from his JLE



trip with Ohr Somayach, he dug up the *tzitzit* that had been buried in his closet since high school and now wears them every day. He also regularly attends morning prayer services and even finds a nice place in the college library to pray *mincha* (afternoon prayers) between classes. Shamir says that since he came back from his JLE trip, he and his mother and two brothers (one was on JLE with him) are all keeping Shabbat together — a spiritual boost for the whole family.

In the short term Shamir hopes to return to Ohr Somayach on a summer program. In the long term he would like to "learn and earn" by running a business in New York while living in Israel and learning Torah every day.