



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Yitro 5774

### Stop People, What's That Sound?

Rabbi Josh Hoffman

**B**efore the revelation at Mt. Sinai, God tells Moshe to set bounds around the mountain and warn the people not to touch it, on penalty of death. He then tells Moshe, “When the blast of the ram’s horn is drawn out, they will ascend the mountain” (Shemos 19:12-13). The Talmud (Beitzah, 5a) explains that the prohibition of touching Mt. Sinai was operative only as long as the divine presence rested there, during the revelation. When the shofar was sounded, marking the withdrawal of the divine presence from the scene, the prohibition ended, and anyone who wished to touch Mt. Sinai, or to ascend it, was permitted to do so. In light of this teaching of the Talmud, an incident that took place shortly after the Six-Day War in 1967 is thrown into sharper relief.

A short time after the war, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, then Chief Rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces, and later Chief Rabbi of Israel, announced that he would be making an expedition to climb up what he believed to be Mt. Sinai, since it was now in Israel’s possession. Many people were puzzled by this projected trip, because of the Talmud’s statement that Mt. Sinai had special significance only as long as the divine presence was there during the revelation. Some cynics, still upset over Rav Goren’s foray onto parts of the Temple Mount generally considered unapproachable because of our impure status generated by contact with corpses, quipped that he wanted to climb up Mt. Sinai in order to give the Torah back ! (It should be noted, in Rav Goren’s defense, that he marshaled halachic sources to show that what he did was permissible). Rav Goren himself explained that Mt. Sinai still has special significance, because, as we read in Pirkei Avos (6:2), Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said, ‘ Every day a heavenly voice issues forth from Mt. Choreiv (Sinai) saying, ‘ Woe to the ‘briyos’ (people) on account of their neglect of Torah.’

Interestingly, Rabbi Yisroel Lifshitz, in his commentary Tiferes Yisroel, notes that he heard from geographers that a rumbling sound is regularly emitted from the mountain commonly identified as Sinai, and that is what the beraysa is referring to. Although this remark is certainly fascinating in its own right, it does not, in itself, tell us much about the meaning of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s statement. What, then, is the significance of the voice emanating from Sinai?

Rabbi Moshe Einstadter of Cleveland, in his book *Yesodos of Sefer Shemos*, presents a lengthy, beautiful essay on the words of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi. The upshot of his remarks is that the essence of the Jewish soul was defined by the revelation at Mt. Sinai, so that the Jewish psyche, since that time, is a reflection of the mitzvos of the Torah. The voice that emanates from Sinai, referred to as a ‘bas kol,’ or, or, literally, the daughter of a voice, is the reverberation of the original revelation within the psyche of the Jew. A Jew who does not engage in Torah study, and who does not observe the mitzvos of the Torah, is not responding to the voice of his own soul. Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi goes on to say that a person is considered free only if he engages in Torah study. Freedom means to be able to bring out one’s own inner self, and, therefore, a Jew who does not observe the mitzvos of the Torah is not really free. The voice reverberating from Sinai, thus, bids us to be true to our inner self, as members of the Jewish people, engaging in Torah study and observing its mitzvos.

Although Rabbi Einstadter does not mention this, perhaps we can expand on his approach with a further insight from a verse in parshas Vaeschanan. Moshe, in describing the revelation at Mt. Sinai, tells the nation, “God spoke these words to your entire assembly on the mountain from the fire, the cloud and the fog, with a great voice, ‘ve-lo yasaf’ (which did not end)” (Devorim 5:19). Rashi there,

in his first interpretation of the words, 'velo yasaf, explains them as Targum Onkeles does, and as we have translated them, to mean 'which did not stop.' The Maharal of Prague, in his super-commentary to Rashi, Gur Aryeh, explains that God is constantly imparting wisdom to people, and in this sense His voice never stops. Rabbi Yehoshua Hartman, in his notes to the Gur Aryeh, directs our attention to the remarks of Maharal in his work Nesivos Olam, Nesiv HaTorah, chapter seven, where he notes that in the blessing for learning Torah that we make each day, we refer to God as the 'Nosein HaTorah' - the One Who gives the Torah, in the present tense, rather than the One Who gave the Torah, in the past tense, because He is constantly giving us Torah. This is the meaning, he says, of Moshe's description of the voice heard at Sinai as one that never stops.

Expanding on the teaching of the Maharal, we may add that Rav Soloveitchik often spoke of the unique role that each person has in revealing new explanations of Torah, and that one can never know who will teach us the meaning of a particular part of Torah. This is the meaning of the prayer we say at the end of each Shmoneh Esreh, asking God to grant us our portion in Torah. In light of Rabbi Einstadter's explanation of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's teaching, then, perhaps we can add that the voice reverberating from Sinai is that of God teaching each person the unique part of Torah that defines his unique role among the Jewish people in revealing the true meaning of the Torah.

I would like to suggest another, completely different explanation of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's statement about the voice reverberating from Sinai. As we noted, the voice says 'Woe to the briyos on account of their neglect of Torah.' Although Rabbi Einstadter understands the word 'briyos' to refer to the Jewish people, it may well refer to mankind in general. Rabbi Goren, in his work Toras HaMoadim (pages 42- 43), discusses the term 'ahavas habriyos,' often found in Talmudic literature, and demonstrates that, while 'ahavas Yisroel' refers to love of one's fellow Jew, 'ahavas habriyos' refers to love of mankind, in general. Perhaps, then, we can explain the term briyos in the statement 'Woe unto the briyos due to the neglect of the Torah' in

the same way. The Jewish nation was charged, at Mt. Sinai, to be a 'kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Shemos 19:6). As we have noted in the past, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohein Kook explained this to mean that our task is to demonstrate holiness within the context of a nation, to show all nations that a life of holiness is not restricted to people living alone on a mountain, but is something that has relevance to a nation involved in all the various aspects of life necessary for a nation to exist. On the individual level, too, then, connecting oneself to God in daily life can, and should, be realized in all areas of life, by all people. When the Jewish people neglects the Torah and does not live up to the calling it was given at Sinai, all of mankind suffers, and the reverberating voice coming from Sinai declares; 'Woe to mankind due to the neglect of the Torah.'

On a further level, perhaps we can add that Rabbi Naphtoli Tzvi Yehudah Berlin - the Netziv - in the introduction to his Ha'amek Davar, to the book of Shemos, notes that Shemos is called, by the author of Halachos Gedolos, 'Chumash Sheni,' or the second book. That author, known as the Bahag, does not attach a number to any of the other five books of Moshe in assigning them names. The Netziv explains that, according to the Bahag, there is an intrinsic connection between the first two books of the Torah. Whereas the book of Bereishis describes the physical creation of the universe, the book of Shemos, or 'the second book,' in the terminology of the Bahag, describes, in its presentation of the redemption from Egypt and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the spiritual completion of the universe. The Netziv explains that this is because the creation of the world was not complete until the Torah was given to the Jewish nation. Thus, when the Jewish people neglects the study and observance of Torah, all of creation suffers. Perhaps that is why, as Tiferes Yisraell notes, an actual rumbling is heard from Mt. Sinai each day. This rumbling indicates that creation itself is incomplete as long as the Jewish people does not properly observe the Torah and fulfill its function in the world as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, influencing all of mankind to live in accordance with the guidelines God has mandated.

# A Retrospective: From Servitude to Sinai

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

In retrospect, the book of Shmot reflects that the Jewish nation is born through a two-stage process, with the road to Sinai passing through Egypt. The Exodus and Revelation are both clearly portrayed in the Torah as critical components in the formation of our national character.

## Questions

Why are the Exodus and Revelation both essential to the birth of the Jewish nation? Is there a philosophical continuum between these two events that might inform our lives today?

## Approaches

**A.** At first glance, the questions raised seem clearly rhetorical. The Torah itself openly elucidates lessons to be learned from each of these monumental events – and rabbinic literature is replete with additional observations.

The existence of God; God's hand in history; our obligation to be kind to strangers; the equality of our personal origins; gratitude to God for our freedom; the recognition that true freedom carries obligations; the transience of seemingly powerful empires; the primacy of law – these are only a few of the foundational ideas so clearly conveyed by the two powerful experiences which shape the earliest moments of our national history.

**B.** And yet, perhaps an even more basic observation can be made about the nature of our early national journey, inspired by a parallel, yet quieter journey: the individual passage of the potential convert who wishes to join the Jewish nation today.

The question is raised in the Talmud: Where does the potential convert begin? What is the first step along the path towards conversion to Judaism?

One would assume the answer to be obvious: the journey should begin with elucidation of the mitzvot. After all, what defines Judaism if not the Torah and its laws? Shouldn't the initial requirement for entry into a nation forged at Sinai be the understanding and acceptance of the law given at Sinai? Nothing else would seem appropriate.

The rabbis, however, disagree. In a striking Talmudic passage they clearly outline the first step a potential convert must take:

“If a prospective proselyte comes to convert in this day, we say to him: ‘What did you perceive that prompted you to come? Did you not know that the Jewish people are afflicted, oppressed, downtrodden and harassed – and that hardships are regularly visited upon them?’

If the individual responds: ‘I know, and I am unworthy [of sharing in their hardships],’ we accept him immediately [as a potential convert worthy of education] and we inform him of some ‘minor’ mitzvot and some ‘major’ mitzvot...”

Apparently the rabbis feel that there is a prerequisite to the acceptance of mitzvot. Before an individual can begin to accept the Torah, he must first meet the challenge of belonging; he must first be willing to throw his lot in with the Jewish people, whatever trials that choice might produce, whatever difficulties might ensue.

**C.** What, however, is the basis of this rabbinic position? What source can the Talmudic scholars cite to support their confident claim that conversion to Judaism must begin with the choice to “belong”?

The answer, it would seem, is powerfully simple. The rabbis believe that the initial journey of an individual who wishes to join the Jewish nation must mirror the initial journey of the nation itself.

As stated above, the Jewish nation is born through a two-stage process. Before we could arrive at Sinai God challenged us with participation in the Exodus. Before we could experience Revelation we had to choose to “belong” to the Jewish people. Each of us had to throw our lot in with our fellow Israelites, to leave the familiar and travel into the unknown, to follow the leadership of a relative stranger towards a destiny shrouded in mystery. The Midrashic tradition that only a fraction of the Israelites actually followed Moshe into the wilderness reflects a keen awareness of the difficulty of this decision.

The rituals of the conversion process, as we have seen, are derived from the experience of the Israelites immediately prior to and during the Revelation at Sinai. The first step towards conversion, however, like the first step of our national journey, is rooted in the Exodus.

Reaching across the ages, the journey of the book of Shmot speaks to us clearly. First you must choose to “belong.”

# Intellectual Curiosity and the Search for Truth

Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb

It would be hard to overestimate the importance and centrality of the Aseres Ha-dibros. Aside from the singular historical phenomenon of divine revelation to an entire nation, the overarching significance of the Dibros is further highlighted by the view (see Bamidbar Rabbah 13, R. Saadiah Gaon, and others) that the Ten Commandments encapsulate the essence of all 613 mitzvos.

Given the stature of the Aseres Ha-dibros we can reasonably assume that they include only the most profound and lofty ideals. The initial dibrah, for example, clearly lives up to this expectation. “Anochi Hashem Elokecha,” I am the Lord your God (Shemos 20:2), is the foundation of our belief system and is thus certainly an appropriate way to begin. The subsequent dibros similarly express values and beliefs which are central to Jewish life.

But then comes the conclusion: “Lo sachmod beis rei’echa lo sachmod eishes rei’echa,” we are commanded not to covet someone else’s home or spouse, and not to be jealous of their servants and possessions, “ve’chol asher lerei’echa,” or anything else that someone else has and we do not (20:14). This is surprising, to say the least. After all, given the significance of the preceding commandments it seems odd to end with something so mundane. Isn’t it anti-climactic to go from the theological heights of “anochi Hashem” to banality of “don’t covet your friend’s donkey?” This is the crescendo of the Aseres Ha-dibros?

My rebbe, Rav Michael Rosensweig (torahweb.org), suggests that if we appreciate the deeper meaning of “lo sachmod” then we will also understand why it is actually both the perfect compliment to “anochi Hashem” and the ideal ending to the Aseres Ha-dibros.

The Ibn Ezra (20:13) famously questions the very premise of “lo sachmod;” how it is possible, he wonders, for the Torah to legislate what a person wants? Aren’t emotions beyond our control? What about the notion that “the heart wants what it wants?” He answers that commandment of “lo sachmod” comes to correct this mistaken assumption. The Ibn Ezra explains that this prohibition is based on the theological assumption that all of our material success is determined by Hashem and, therefore, in truth it makes no sense to be jealous of what your neighbor has. Jealousy obsessing over something that doesn’t belong to us is antithetical to the belief that each person has what God in

His infinite kindness and inscrutable wisdom has deemed appropriate. After all, if Hashem wanted you to possess your neighbor’s house, for example, you would already have it. Given this belief it follows that jealousy is not merely prohibited, it’s actually illogical.

Beyond the specifics of this particular commandment, this understanding of “lo sachmod” reveals an even larger – and more important – point. As R. Rosensweig eloquently notes, “Herein precisely lies the unique ambition of the Torah as a value system that seeks to transform and define the human personality. The Torah insists that man’s perspective can and must be shaped by the spiritual-halachic values that give life its purpose.” In other words, from the prohibition against jealousy we learn that the Torah’s ultimate goal isn’t merely to legislate what we can and can’t do, but rather to transform the way we think, not only about the sublime but even about the mundane and not only about the nature of God but even about material possessions.

Not coincidentally, the commandment of “anochi Hashem” is also something which might appear unrealistic; can the Torah really legislate what I believe? Once again the answer is that yes, the aim of the Torah is for us to elevate not only our actions, but our thoughts as well. R. Rosensweig notes that we can now appreciate why, far from peculiar, “lo sachmod” is actually the perfect culmination of the Aseres Ha-dibros, as it serves to both complement the first commandment, as well as to give dramatic expression to the ultimate purpose of the entire Torah.

Of course, actually living up to this standard where everything, even one’s thoughts and emotions, are governed by Torah values is no small feat. But that’s exactly the point. “Anochi Hashem elokecha” in the realm of belief and “lo sachmod” in the realm of emotion are examples of the ambitious agenda that the Torah has in mind for us. If we live in a “halachic reality” then beyond our actions, even our beliefs and desires must be molded by the Torah’s values.

This idea is reflected, as well, in a well known Midrash (Sifrei, V’Zos Ha-Beracha 2) regarding Matan Torah. The Midrash describes how, before giving the Torah to the Jewish people, Hashem first offered it to various other nations of the world and yet, in each case, they rejected offer because of a certain aspect of the Torah which was incompatible with

their nature. For example, the descendants of Esav rejected the Torah because the prohibition against murder went against their nature. Similarly, the Midrash continues, the descendants of Amon, Moav, and Yishmael also rejected the Torah because of various other prohibitions, such as theft and sexual immorality, which ran counter to their respective natures. The Jewish people, the Midrash concludes, accepted the Torah without precondition and without reservation.

Upon further reflection there is something very curious about this Midrash. The various reasons for their collective rejection of the Torah – murder, theft, and sexual immorality – are all included in the Sheva Mitzvos B'nei Noach, the Seven Noachide Laws, which are incumbent upon all people. Given that they are obligated in these prohibitions anyway – without apparent concern for their respective natures – what sense did it make for them to reject the Torah because of these commandments?

Rav Shneur Kotler explains that there is a fundamental difference between the comprehensive aim of the Torah and the more minimalist goal of the Seven Noachide Laws. The Noachide Laws are meant merely to regulate human behavior. These laws govern basic behaviors which everyone is expected to abide by. Even though a given prohibition may run counter to a person's natural inclination, nevertheless the person is expected to sublimate that inclination and conform to the basic tenets of morality.

The mitzvos of the Torah, on the other hand, are intended to go ever further and transform the personality

of the one who observes these laws. For example, “lo sirtzach” in the Torah doesn't just prohibit murder, it is intended to create a personality that is incapable of committing murder. The same is true of the prohibition against adultery, theft, and all of the mitzvos.

As a result of this essential difference R. Kotler explains that we can understand the decision of the nations that rejected the Torah. Even though there is overlap between the prohibitions, the Seven Noachide Laws just require a person to change his or her behavior – not nature – and therefore everyone, no matter their nature, is obligated to regulate their behavior based on these laws. The Torah, on the other hand, is supposed to mold a person's personality and, as such, the various nations simply couldn't accept the Torah when some its values so directly contradicted their essential natures.

In other words, just as R. Rosensweig highlighted through the specific example of “lo sachmod,” R. Kotler develops the general idea that the goal of the Torah is not merely behavioral regulation, but to transform the human personality.

The lesson for us is clear if not easy. The Torah places rigorous demands on our behavior, but even more challenging is the ultimate goal of the Torah to mold the human personality. Mitzvos should have the desired impact not only on what we do but also on who we are. May we all have the strength and perseverance to advance on the road towards this most lofty aspiration.

## Our Torah

*Rabbi Ephraim Meth*

**A**t Mount Sinai, Hashem gave Moshe the written and the oral Torah. He also gave him a gift of far greater value, a responsibility far more awesome. Hashem bound His values to the Torah and appointed us as its interpreters. Let us examine some manifestations of this privilege as they appear in the Torah and the Talmud.

Rabbi Eliezer was one of the greatest Torah sages of his generation. On one occasion, a heavenly voice issued forth to support his halakhic ruling. Encouraged by this support, he refused to concede to the majority of scholars who had argued with him, and was consequently ostracized by them. Rabbi Yehoshua, who led the opposition, grounded his actions in the verse stating that Torah, “is not in the

heaven (Devarim 30:12).” This teaches us that a heavenly voice does not carry as much halakhic valence as the decision of the majority of the generation's scholars. The Talmud tells us, in the name of Eliyahu the prophet, that Hashem was pleased by R. Yehoshua's response. Rather than responding with anger, He happily declared, “My sons have been victorious over Me (Bava Metzia 59b).”

A similar point can be deduced from the narrative of Rabbah's death. The Talmud (Bava Metzia 86a) relates that as Rabbah was dying, Hashem was arguing with the heavenly tribunal over a controversial point in the laws of ritual impurity. Both parties agreed to bring Rabbah, who was an expert in those laws, to adjudicate the dispute. The

angel of death was sent to fetch him, and Rabbah issued a ruling with his dying breath. (Incidentally, he ruled that Hashem was correct.)

Why was Rabbah needed to make this decision? Hashem, who authored the entire Torah, must certainly be correct in any dispute! The *Derashos ha-Ran* (cited in the introduction to *Ketzos ha-Choshen*) answers that at Mount Sinai, Hashem relinquished his right to interpret the Torah's intent. We now own the meaning of Torah; it is our privilege, and our responsibility.

Although Hashem made us masters of the Torah's meaning we are nevertheless not fully free to interpret it. Unlike the Sadducees and the Karaites, we believe that interpretative authority lies with our Rabbis, whose sensibilities are refined by a chain of tradition that reaches back to the times of Moshe. The final decision in Torah law is based on human understanding; however, that human understanding must be based on a life-long quest for absolute, divine truth.

Our acceptance of Rabbinic authority has its roots in *Parshas Yisro*. After hearing the first two commandments directly from Hashem, the Jewish nation pleaded with Moshe: "You speak with us and we will listen; do not let Hashem speak with us, lest we die (*Shemos* 20:16)." The Jews recognized the awesome responsibility inherent

in properly interpreting the Torah. They ceded their opportunity to define the Divine will to Moshe, his students, and the Torah scholars of every generation.

The Midrash relates that each time Hashem spoke the Jews standing around Mount Sinai died and subsequently had to be revived by angels. Why did Hashem impose such an experience on us, when he knew that we were incapable of surviving it? It seems that Hashem was sending us an eternal message about our potential; there is no Jew who does not have the ability to make himself into a sage and scholar. Dedication to discerning the Divine intent is not a privilege reserved for the elite.

At the end of his life, Moshe wrote a Torah scroll for each and every tribe. By doing so, he intended to emphasize this very point. Every Jew of every tribe has the opportunity to become an interpreter of the Torah. Every Jew can come to possess this privilege, which once belonged to Hashem alone. However, there is a specific path that leads to this lofty level, a path where every footfall must be directed to discerning the Divine will. Those who walk this path fulfill the prophetic prediction describing us as "a nation of priests" – a nation of Torah teachers and servants of Hashem. Parallel to this path walk the members of "our holy nation," hallowed by heeding the words of the sages who transmit the values of Hashem.

## The Reasons for the Observance of Shabbat

*Rabbi David Horwitz*

As part of the Ten Commandments, *Exodus* 20:8-11 states the text of the fourth commandment, the Sabbath.

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the L-RD your god: you shall not do any work-you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or your stranger who is within your settlements. For in six days the L-RD made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore the L-RD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

As is well known, the exposition of the Ten Commandments in *Deuteronomy* presents a different reason for the Shabbat.

Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the L-RD

your God has commanded you (*Deut.* 5:12) ... Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the L-RD your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the L-RD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day. (*Deut.* 5:15)

Which reason is primary: the one given in *Exodus* that begins with Remember [Zakhor], or the other given in *Deuteronomy* that begins with Observe [Shamor]? Moreover, why does the Torah present both the *Exodus* reason- creation of the universe by God, and the *Deuteronomy* reason- deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage? Finally, what is the relationship between the two reasons? Rambam devotes an entire chapter of *The Guide of the Perplexed* to these topics (*Guide* 2:31, Pines ed., pp. 359-60). His explanation emphasizes

themes that are present throughout his presentation in the Guide of ta'amei ha-mitzvot. He emphasizes correct opinions, he emphasizes that actions are commanded to inculcate correct opinions, and he insists on the teleological benefits that the mitzvah has for those who are commanded to observe it- in this case, both a physical and intellectual/spiritual benefit.

He writes as follows:

Perhaps it has already become clear to you what the cause of the Law's establishing the Sabbath so firmly and ordaining death by stoning for breaking it is. The Master of the Prophets has put people to death because of it. It comes third after the existence of the Deity and the denial of dualism. For the prohibition of the worship of anything except Him only aims at the affirmation of the belief in His unity. You know from what I have said that opinions do not last unless they are accompanied by actions that strengthen them, make them generally known, and perpetuate them among the multitude. For this reason we are ordered by the Law to exalt this day, in order that the principle of the creation of the world in time be established and universally known in the world through the fact that all people refrain from working on one and the same day. If it is asked: What is the cause of this? The answer is For in six days the L-RD made... [Exod. 20:11].

For this commandment two different causes are given, corresponding to two different effects. In the first Decalogue [Exodus], the cause for exalting the Sabbath is stated as follows: For in six days the L-RD made and so on. In Deuteronomy, on the other hand, it is said: Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt...; therefore the L-RD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day [Deuteronomy 5:15]. This is correct. For the effect, according to the first statement [in Exodus], is to regard that day as noble and exalted. As it says: therefore the L-RD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it [Exod. 20:11]. This is the effect consequent upon the cause stated in the words: For in six days, and so on. However, the order given us by the Law with regard to it and the commandment ordaining us in particular to keep it [i.e., the verse in Deuteronomy] are an

effect consequent upon the cause that we had been slaves in Egypt where we did not work according to our free choice and when we wished and where we had not the power to refrain from working. Therefore, we have been commanded inactivity and rest so that we should conjoin the two things: the belief in a true opinion- namely, the creation of the world in time, which, at the first go and with the slightest of speculations, shows us that the Deity exists- and the memory of the benefit God bestowed upon us by giving us rest from under the burden of the Egyptians (Exod. 6:7). Accordingly, the Sabbath is, as it were, of universal benefit, both with reference to a true speculative opinion and to the well-being of the state of the body.

In Guide 3:43 (Pines ed., p. 570), Rambam reiterates these ideas.

With regard to the Sabbath, the reason for it is too well known to have need of being explained, for it is known how great a rest it procures. Because of it, the seventh part of the life of every individual consists in pleasure and repose from the fatigue and weariness from which there is no escape either for the young or for the old. At the same time, it perpetuates throughout the periods of time an opinion whose value is very great, namely, the assertion that the world has been produced in time.

Elsewhere, (Guide 3:31), Rambam emphasizes that "every commandment from among these the six hundred and thirteen commandments exists either with a view to communicating a correct opinion, or putting an end to an unhealthy opinion, or to communicating a rule of justice, or to warding off an injustice, or to endowing men with a noble moral quality, or to warning them against an evil moral quality. Thus, all [the commandments] are bound up with three things: opinions, moral qualities, and political civic actions" (Pines ed., p. 524). In the case of Shabbat, the Rambam's interpretation of the dual declarations of Zakhor and Shamor, combined with the two reasons of the creation of the universe by God and the release from the bondage of Egypt yield a result that one commandment contains with itself benefits both "with reference to a true speculative opinion and to the well-being of the state of the body."

# Just Say Know

Rabbi Dr. John Krug

I think there is a most interesting, valuable and quite relevant lesson to be learned from this week's Parasha (as there is from every parsha!). While I know that virtually everyone will be writing about the Aseret Hadibrot (not the "Ten Commandments," as it is erroneously translated, but, rather, the "Ten Sayings"), the focus here is going to be on an enigmatic Rashi at the beginning of the sedreh.

On the first Rashi (Ex: 18:1), where Yitro's name is mentioned, Rashi tells us that Yitro had seven names: Reu'el, Yeter, Yitro, Chovav...et. al. The first name for which Rashi gives us a reason is Yeter: "Al shem sheyatar parsha achat b'Torah: 've'atah techezeh," that his name Yeter was given because he was meritorious to have one section added into the Torah, i.e. the section known as "ve'atah techezeh."

The words "ve'atah techezeh" appear in Shemot 18:21, where Yitro outlines the scenario for how the court system should be set up. He describes the qualifications needed for the position of being part of the legal and judiciary system: "anshei chayil, yirei Elokim, anshei emet, sonei batzah" ("Able men, G-d fearing men, men of truth, people who hate injustice"), how the hierarchical structure should be established: "V'samtah aleihaem sarei alaphim, sarei me'ot, sarei chamishim v'sarei assarot." ("Courts of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens") and how they should go about their duties.

It is fascinating, and a major question addressed by many meforshim, that when Moshe actually went out to implement Yitro's sagacious suggestions, we are told (Shemot 18:24-25) "V'ya'as kol asher amar...vayivchar Moshe anshei chayil mikol Yisroel..." Moshe did as his father-in-law had stated, but chose only anshei chayil, "able men." The various meforshim debate as to why the other qualifications and prerequisites were either disregarded, subsumed or, simply, not available.

What is interesting is that this section actually does NOT begin here. Usually we refer to a section, a parsha or a sedreh

by using its opening words (e.g. Yitro, Bo, Beshalach, etc.) This section actually starts several sentences earlier with pasuk 17: "Vayomer choten Moshe eilav, lo tov hadavar asher atah oseh." Yitro's statement actually begins with the words, "what you are doing is no good." So, why is this section called "ve'atah techezeh" and not "lo tov," Yitro's actual opening words?

From a psychological point of view and perspective, the answer, I believe, lies in the fact that it is very easy to go around telling people what they're doing incorrectly. It is easy to criticize, condemn and censure. It does not take much effort to disapprove of someone else, or to disparage other human beings. It takes little to say "lo tov hadavar asher atah oseh," "what you are doing is no good."

However, this does not make anyone meritorious for anything. It is only when one proactively "steps up the plate," comes up with a positive scenario and suggestion, only when one caringly and carefully supplies constructive criticism, only when one delicately provides details for the development of a program and project--only THEN does one become meritorious and praiseworthy--only THEN does one actually reach the heights of a madreigah of having a whole section added in the Torah in your name. This, then, is why the section is called "ve'atah techezeh" and why Rashi stresses the name Yeter in his commentary, for it is only when Yitro focused his remarks on proactive input, practical application and positive involvement that he could earn his eternal place in our Torah.

If, in fact, there is any truth to the aforementioned notion, it should serve as a powerful lesson to us. The incident should be a role model worth emulating. We should be careful, not only of lashon harah, but also of not providing verbiage which could be construed as undermining, undercutting and demoralizing. We should always position ourselves for enhancement and improvement in positive ways, both intrapersonally and interpersonally.