

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 22 Shevat 5770.

TORAH DIALOGUE
(p. 288 Hz) (p. 445 S) (p. 276 Hi) (p. 394 AS)
YITRO יתרו

1. Yitro heard all that Hashem did for Bnei Yisrael, specifically taking them out of Egypt. Yitro then came to visit the camp of the Israelites in the desert. Our rabbis interpret the sequence of events and accept the fact that Yitro converted to Judaism. Yitro was not the only person who heard what transpired in Egypt. The entire world heard about it as evidenced in a verse in Tehillim. The world shook and became intimidated and ran from fear. Only Yitro was the one who heard about it and came close. According to the Midrash he heard and came so close that he decided to convert to Judaism. The simplest peshat, the most literal interpretation of the narrative, is that Yitro heard what happened in Egypt, and knew that Bnei Yisrael, under his son-in-law's leadership, brought mighty Egypt to its knees and left her annihilated and decimated as they made their way to journey in the desert to go to the Promised Land. The fact that Yitro was the only one who heard about it and came to visit is understood simply in the context of the narrative, being that his visit was the opportunity to deliver and escort his daughter and grandchildren to the "King of Israel", Moshe, who was their husband and father respectively. He came because it was the proper opportunity to reunite the family. The literal interpretation of the narrative is understood without any need to create the theory that Yitro converted. I believe what supports the idea that he converted is future connections with the descendants of Yitro, who end up residing in Eretz Yisrael far from their homeland of Midian. (RED)

2. Yitro's contribution during the time of his visit was to advise Moshe to develop a greater number of judges to assist the judicial process and leadership needs of the Jewish people. Later, when Moshe discusses the implementation of this advice, in Devarim, Yitro was not given any credit for this judicial institution; rather Hashem commands Moshe to implement this new idea. One would question the omission of Yitro receiving credit when this is related later in the text. The Toldot Yitzchak states that sometimes an idea must come from the outside in order to be implemented correctly. Had Moshe suggested this measure it might have been construed that he wanted to evade the burden of additional work. I can think of many situations where the idea of the Toldot Yitzchak is applicable, as in most areas of employment. For example, if a rabbi suggests to his congregation that they should hire an assistant rabbi because of the rapid growth of the community, it might be construed by congregants that the rabbi is looking for an easier road in his work load. When it comes from others then no bad reflection is revealed. The Toldot Yitzchak continues to state that had Bnei Yisrael offered the suggestion, it would have looked as if they lacked faith in the job Moshe was doing. The fact that the suggestion comes from a total outsider, as a state visit from the Minister of Midian, served well for the circumstances involved.

3. Moshe went up Mount Sinai; Hashem called him from the mountain and said, "So shall you say to the House of Yaakov and relate to the Children of Yisrael" (19:3). Our Sages tell us that the expression "House of Yaakov – Bais Yaakov" refers to the women, and Bnei Yisrael refers to the men. Rashi indicates that the way you speak to women must be in a softer tone than the harsh tones that could be used in addressing the men, especially on religious issues. The Maharshah wrote that the verse can be interpreted differently with a slight tweaking of the grammar involved: "So shall you say to the House of Yaakov, to the Bais Yaakov (the women), and they shall relate (the message) to Bnei Yisrael (the men)." If you want to get an idea across to the nation, give the idea first to the women. When the women embrace it they will make sure that the men fall in line. Give it to the women and they will teach it to the men in a way that the men will see the great advantage of adhering to this message. The Maharshah was not trying to be cute but he is accurate and insightful when portraying the women as possessing influence over their husbands and the men folk of the nation. [RED's note: Let us say an idea was presented by the President of the United States in addressing a women's platform, mandating the women to carry the message to the rest of the country. One would wonder how this would succeed. It might not be politically correct to do something of this nature, but it might work as the Maharshah suggests.] (The Maharshah was Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Aidel 1555-1631, Poland.)

4. It is not possible for each individual Jew to fulfill all the Mitzvot of the Torah. There are certain Mitzvot which are addressed only to the Kohanim; there are other Mitzvot that are unique to only the Levi'im; there are certain Mitzvot that are applicable to the High Priest, and some only to the King; there are Mitzvot that are applicable only to a person who owns a field in Israel. Consequently, when the Torah states that the entire nation together responded to God and said that all that God commands of them they will do (19:8), this is extremely important because it is only when the entire nation as a collective unit enters into a partnership to fulfill the Mitzvot that God commands them, do we find a covenant being established. No individual can fulfill these Mitzvot by himself. He requires the participation and cooperation of his brethren in the nation of Israel. (Meshech Chochmah.) This is a fundamental idea which I believe carries over into the concept of a congregation davening as a minyan. The fact that no individual can do it alone implies that certain Mitzvot are out of reach without a minimal number of participants. Saying Kedushah, Kaddish, etc. are examples of prayers that cannot be said without a minyan. The daily performance of Mitzvot can be deficient if a person is not part of a congregation. The Tzibbur is not just the number 10; it is representative of the concept of the nation of Israel. (RED)

5. Who knows Ten? Ten are the Sayings with which God created the entire world in the first week of Creation. Ten are the Plagues with which Hashem annihilated the Egyptian empire. And Ten are the Big Commandments through which God revealed Himself to the nation of Israel, and in essence to the World. This is not a mere exercise of

"Who knows Ten?" The Chidushei Harim saw this as more than an exercise in semantics; it is a spiritual process in the development of human history. The world did not exist; it was a void and a lack of order. The Ten Sayings brought nature to an ordered form in creation. Nevertheless man declined spiritually and reached the bottom level of spirituality in Egypt with the 49th level of impurity. According to the Chidushei Harim's approach, the Ten Plagues was a process of fixing the world by eliminating so much of the evil that existed at that time. Now at Sinai the Ten Commandments would elevate to a greater level the realization and embrace of Hashem and His Commandments to bring about a higher form of morality to the world in creating the nation of Israel as a Light unto the Nations.

6. The last of the Ten Commandments is the one that states "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet his wife, his manservant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that belongs to your fellow man" (20:14). Our Sages went further to make sure to safeguard this prohibition lest it lead to an act of theft or adultery when the desire overcomes an individual, and instills within the individual a Ru'ach Shtut, an overwhelming spirit of foolishness and insanity, for that is what it takes to violate these principles of law. One Chassidic master came up with a brilliant statement when he pondered greatly why our Sages prohibited being alone with a woman who was married to another man, while they never prohibited being alone with another man's money! Man is subjected to the devices of his own strong desires. Education is needed at all stages of his life to make sure that he understands limits and boundaries, and restricts his desires to his own possessions. Man would never sin if he did not think he would get away with it. Not in areas of theft, and not in areas of sexual misconduct. It is not just an overwhelming desire, but it requires devious thinking, and man is able to convince himself that he can do it, get what he wants, and not be caught. The Madoffs and Rothsteins of society are evil people and people who were devious to think that they were smart enough never to be caught in their sinful ways. The number of years of incarceration that they are receiving will not eliminate the problem from society. Not only are they greedy and evil, but everybody who invests with them has a little bit of the same desire – the desire to make more and after that make more; an endless sense of greed and success. The Chassidic master is correct.

7. Each of the Ten Commandments is a capital offense. A purposeful violation of the Shabbat code is punishable by death. Murder, kidnapping, and adultery are subject to the same punishment, according to the Torah. This by itself is worthy of greater discussion, but allow me to pose a question. A man has a sexual relationship with another man's wife. They were warned, and they were caught in the act, and brought to trial on the charge of adultery. In the meantime, the woman became pregnant from this relationship. She gave birth to a healthy baby boy who halachically is a mamzer, a bastard, who was not permitted to marry within the Israel nation. Both mother and father are waiting for execution. Has the man performed the Mitzvah

of Pru U'rvu, to be fruitful and multiply, by virtue of siring a mamzer?

HAFTORAH

(p. 302 Hz) (p. 464 S) (p. 854 Hi) (p. 1154 AS)

ISAIAH ישעיה

The period of Isaiah's prophecy is connected to the year of the death of King Uzziah. Uzziah was a brave and able king who raised the material status of Judah, but in a state of pride saw himself as the personification of State and Temple. He entered the Holy Temple to serve as a Priest. The attempt, however, was frustrated by the touch of God's finger, and leprosy suddenly broke out on his forehead. The "death" of Uzziah is interpreted by our Sages as the year in which Uzziah abdicated the throne on account of this incident. Chizkuni refers to this incident when discussing Mt. Sinai being "out of bounds" for all living beings during the time of Revelation. If anyone ascended the mountain, he would be stoned or shot with an arrow (Rashbam) or killed with lightning bolts (Targum Yonatan). The death of the person on the mountain would seemingly defile the mountain even more. Not so, says Chizkuni. Judgment must still be enacted even if in the holy of holies, says Chizkuni, citing the cases of Uzziah and Nadav and Avihu. In all cases cited, the intent of the sinner was to serve Hashem, but the action was still ill advised since it violated God's command.

SHABBAT HALACHAH

The Rama (Orach Chaim 263:10) writes that the accepted custom is that the woman who lights the *Shabbat* candles accepts *Shabbat* at that time, unless she stipulates in advance that she does not intend to accept *Shabbat*. This stipulation which need not be made orally, should not be made except under extenuating circumstances. A man who lights *Shabbat* candles need not accept *Shabbat* at that point. However, it is preferable that he, too, stipulate in advance that he does not wish to accept *Shabbat* at that point. Although the woman who lights *Shabbat* candles exempts all the members of the household in the *Mitzvah*, it is not necessary for the rest of the family – even the daughters – to accept *Shabbat* at that point. They have until just before sunset in which to accept *Shabbat* (see Rama, *ibid.*; Mishnah Berura 42,44). If the mother wishes her daughters to accept *Shabbat* when she lights the candles, the daughters must do so because of the *Mitzvah* to honor one's parents.