

In memory of all those brutally murdered in the war on Israel,
including the recently fallen soldiers of the IDF

בס"ד

3 FEBRUARY 2024 | 24 SHEVAT 5784

VOLUME 37 | #22

DAF HASHAVUA

יתרו | YITRO

SHABBAT ENDS:

London 5.43pm
Birmingham 5.47pm
Cardiff 5.58pm
Dublin 6.03pm
Edinburgh 5.46pm
Glasgow 5.50pm
Hull 5.43pm
Leeds 5.43pm
Liverpool 5.50pm
Manchester 5.47pm
Sheffield 5.47pm
Southend 5.39pm
Southport 5.53pm
Jerusalem 5.53pm

Shabbat Mevarechim
Rosh Chodesh Adar I is
next Friday and Shabbat



SIDRA BREAKDOWN

יִתְרוֹ YITRO

5th Sidra in: שְׁמֹטָה SHEMOT

By Numbers:
75 VERSES
1,105 WORDS
4,022 LETTERS

Headlines:
**GIVING OF
THE TORAH
INCLUDING
THE TEN
COMMANDMENTS**

YITRO:

Artscroll p.394
Hertz p.288
Soncino p.445

HAFTARAH:

Artscroll p.1154
Hertz p.302
Soncino p.464

Sidra Summary

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – SHEMOT 18:1-12

Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law and a Midianite priest, hears about the miraculous Exodus from Egypt. He comes to meet Moshe in the desert, together with his daughter Tziporah (Moshe's wife) and Moshe's two sons. Moshe greets Yitro and relates to him what has happened to the Israelites. Yitro and Moshe bring offerings.

Point to Consider: What is the etymology of the name Yitro? (see Rashi to 18:1)

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 18:13-23

According to Rashi's commentary, the narrative now skips forward to an incident after the giving of the Torah. Moshe is busy making halachic rulings from morning to evening. Concerned that this is too much for Moshe, Yitro advises him to set up an alternative system of judging the people, involving the appointment of a cascading system of judges. Only the major issues would be brought directly to Moshe for his judgement.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 18:24-27

Moshe accepts Yitro's advice and appoints judges over sub-groups of 1000, 100, 50 and 10 people. Yitro returns to Midian.

4TH ALIYA (REVI'I) – 19:1-6

The narrative switches back to Rosh Chodesh Sivan, one and a half months after the Exodus, prior to the giving of the Torah. The people travel from Refidim and arrive in the Sinai Desert. Moshe ascends Mount Sinai. God tells Moshe to inform the people that if they listen to His voice and keep His covenant, they will become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation".

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 19:7-19:13

The people agree to God's offer. God tells Moshe to instruct the people to wash their clothing, refrain from marital relations (Rashi)

and not to approach the mountain for the next three days. Moshe relays this to the nation. God's Presence descends onto the mountain; there is thunder, lightning and shofar blasts; the mountain is covered in smoke.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 19:20-20:14

God 'descends' upon Mount Sinai and Moshe ascends again. God once again tells Moshe to warn the people not to approach the mountain. After Moshe descends, God speaks the Ten Commandments:

1. Faith in God's existence
 2. Prohibition of idol worship
 3. Prohibition of taking God's Name in vain
 4. Remembering Shabbat to keep it holy and refraining from 'work'
 5. Honouring one's parents
- You shall not:
6. Murder
 7. Commit adultery
 8. Steal
 9. Bear false testimony
 10. Covet what others have

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 20:15-23

Trembling from this awesome experience, the people retreat and ask Moshe to be a go-between, instead of God speaking to them directly, lest they die. Moshe reassures them. God tells Moshe to warn the nation not to carve certain images (see Rashi). The commandment is given to build a designated altar upon which offerings to God should be brought.

HAFTARAH

The prophet Yeshaya sees a vision of the heavenly court, occupied by God and His angels. Whilst the angels assure Yeshaya that he is personally free of sin, God tells him to warn the people of their eventual exile, due to their stubbornness and iniquities. The evil king Achaz ascends the throne; he will be shown Divine mercy in order to save his righteous son, the future king Chizkiyahu.

United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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A Command to Believe



**ONLY
PORTNOY**

Associate Rebbetzin
at Hendon United
Synagogue

Can you imagine witnessing an open miracle, like the splitting of the sea? People often say that if they had such an experience, if they had that level of certainty, they would live their lives differently. But would they really?

"And Yitro (Jethro) the Priest of Midian heard all that God had done for Moshe (Moses) and Israel; that God had taken them out of Egypt" (Shemot 18:1). Rashi (1040-1105) asks the question: What did Yitro hear that caused him to join the Jewish nation? He answers: the splitting of the Yam Suf (Sea of Reeds) and the war with Amalek.

The Slonimer Rebbe (Rabbi Shalom Noach Berezovsky, 1911-2000) asks how the nation of Amalek could be so arrogant as to rise up against the Jewish people after the miracle of the splitting of the Yam Suf. Were they not convinced of the might of the God of the Jews?

Yitro therefore reasoned that open miracles are not enough to make people have faith in God. If, even after a demonstration as awesome as the sea splitting, the impact is short-lived, there must be a better way to have faith, one that does not depend on witnessing

miracles.

The question is further strengthened by the fact that after the miracle of the splitting of the sea, God gave the Ten Commandments including the commandment of belief in God. If the splitting of the sea was enough, this commandment would not be needed!

The fact that we need a commandment to believe teaches us that the only consistent basis for faith is the fact that we are commanded to believe. We need to cultivate our faith, and live with it on a daily basis, with the Torah as its foundation, and not rely on exciting sound and light shows!

Why do visible miracles have only a fleeting, superficial effect? Because miracles are external experiences that do not change the underlying psychology of the people who witness them. When the miracle is unbelievably powerful,

The fact that we need a commandment to believe teaches us that the only consistent basis for faith is the fact that we are commanded to believe.

such as at the Yam Suf, people are thunderstruck. They really do believe in God, momentarily. But three days later, the dazzle fades.

Yielding to a miracle is like giving in to intimidation. Since the person did not really want to do it, the preferred alternative behaviour reasserts itself as soon as one can get away with it. When the fear (or thrill) of a miracle fades, the ingrained tendencies or habitual behaviours return.

The Torah's ultimate process from Bereishit to Devarim is a movement away from visible miracles toward a process of education. By the time we reach the Talmud, the Rabbis tell us that the age of prophecy and visible miracles is over. Such miracles are too "coercive". God wants humans to use their reason and intellect to choose the right thing out of free will.

Even remarkable miracles, such as Eliyahu's (Elijah's) triumph over the prophets of Baal (Kings I Chapter 18), won only temporary victories of belief. Torah study has and always will be the ultimate source for our faith-inspired way of life. Yitro realised and internalised that message. We can see what a privilege it is to learn Torah, especially in these times, not only to keep our faith but also as a way to live our lives. May the collective Torah study of the Jewish people merit the coming of Mashiach speedily in our days.

January 1949: The UK (Finally) Recognises the State of Israel



**RABBI
MICHAEL
LAITNER**

US Director of Education
& Head of Research at
The Rabbi Sacks Legacy

On 9 October 2023, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke at a special prayer service in Finchley Synagogue as Israel and the Jewish world reeled from the attacks by Hamas. The Prime Minister expressed his support for Israel, the Jewish community and his sorrow at the murderous, barbaric attacks. His sentiments were echoed by several other senior politicians, including the Leader of the Opposition, Sir Keir Starmer.

I doubt that anybody who was present or watching will forget that service. Aware of the UK's stance after Israel declared independence on 14th May 1948, I asked an older member of our community if in 1948 she could ever have imagined such support. Her wry smile told me the answer.

The UK only granted recognition – de facto – to Israel on 29th January 1949. The slow decline of its previous authority in the Land of Israel, was illustrated by its hasty pullout on 14th May 1948, allied to its close diplomatic and military relationships with neighbouring states that had declared war on Israel. Alongside the uncertainty as to whether Israel would even survive, Foreign Secretary

Ernest Bevin¹ initially decided, in stark contrast to the USA's swift recognition of Israel, to determinedly skirt around this matter.

The recently formed United Nations became the principal arena for British policy to play out. In *Personal Witness*², Abba Eban (1915-2002), the Cambridge-educated linguist and orator who served as Israel's first ambassador to the UN, provided a fascinating view of the diplomatic acrobatics. For example, the UK's delegate at the Security Council, Sir Alexander Cadogan, refused to use the word "Israel", instead speaking of "the Jewish authorities in Palestine." Comically, Eban recalled bumping into Cadogan on the *Queen Elizabeth* as both sailed home from New York during the UN's summer recess. Seeing Cadogan emerge from the ship's chapel, Eban asked Cadogan if he had been "praying to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the Jewish authorities in Palestine." Looking around furtively, Cadogan replied, "Isn't our policy a bit



absurd?"

What of British Jewry amidst this situation? Chief Rabbi Sir Israel Brodie (1895-1979) was installed on 28th June 1948. Formerly Senior Jewish Chaplain to HM Forces during World War Two and a committed Zionist, the Chief Rabbi had to tread carefully. Whilst his installation address carefully avoided the situation in Israel, his Rosh Hashana message later that year in the *Jewish Chronicle (JC)* began, "5708 is the wonder year of Israel's history in these latter convulsive decades. At long last the State of Israel has become a fact to be 'recognised publicly', realistically and juridically, and sooner or later by all nations of the world."

The front page of the *JC* on 4th February 1949 reported both British recognition of Israel and the text of a "Special Prayer for Israel" composed by the Chief Rabbi. Today, it is familiar as the nucleus of

our weekly prayer for Israel. With recognition now accorded, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Shertok, the *JC* reported on the same page, said he hoped it would, "contribute to re-establishing the traditional friendship between Britain and the Jews."

¹ Many have accused Bevin of antisemitic motives, as shown for example by *Jewish Chronicle* articles at the time. However, Dr Ronnie Fraser questions this after researching the Israel State Archives. See <https://fathomjournal.org/mandate100-the-antisemite-ernest-bevin-and-the-day-britain-recognised-the-state-of-israel/>. Other articles in Fathom, including by Dr Natan Aridan, shed further light on our topic.

² See ch. 8.

The Clean Speech Effect



RABBI DANIEL FINE

Director of Education, Seed and formerly Community Rabbi at Stanmore & Canons Park Synagogue

Words are descriptive and incredibly malleable. The richness of a language allows for both elaborate and concise ways to convey meaning. Thus, one can speak about “the great mechanical ink-invested producer of the written word”, or simply say “a pen”. Those of linguistic persuasion may wish to decry the “ever-devolving intergenerational moral constructs and behavioral cycles”. Those of short, sharp bent will simply dub it “chutzpah”. Children who wish to absolve themselves of blame (“get away with it”) are very adept at using language to their advantage: “my sibling happened to cry at the exact time my palm met their face with opposite and equal force...” Quipping aside, whilst some generations may have needed a lot of persuading to underline the impact of words, our generation is especially used to it.

Ever since the pay-per-word telegram became extinct, words have become cheap. But seldom have we paid such a price for words. The flames of extremism

and anti-Semitism are lit and fanned through words. All it took was a few misplaced words about Israel allegedly bombing a hospital for Jews to feel under threat across the world. And it is not just in the hallways of anti-Semitism that words dominantly march. It is in our everyday lives. Social media is an area where words can make a huge difference between positive and negative self-esteem. What we say is forever stored and remembered, to be thrust back at us by decision of the algorithm. If words are tools, it is crucial to know how to use them best.

From day one, Jewish teaching has been full of word lessons about the *purpose* and *meaning* of words.



CLEAN SPEECH UK

PROMOTING POSITIVE SPEECH



From Adam overstating God’s command to Eve, to Yosef (Joseph) reporting his dreams to his brothers – the narrative is so word-centric. Why?

As the ‘people of the book’, we have a vastly different concept of words and language to other nations. They see words as functional – conveying a message; Jews view language as holy. Humanity is described as a “speaking spirit” – our human

quality lies in our speech, as the Maharal (c.1512-1609) writes. And as Rashi (1040-1105) points out, the power of the Jewish nation is in our mouths, hence so many mitzvot involving speech. As Rabbi S.R. Hirsch (1808-1888) explains regarding the structure of the first five of the Ten Commandments, the sequence is: mitzvot that involve thought, then speech, then action (the second five are the reverse). Words are our Divine vehicle – we mimic Divine creativity *ex nihilo* by taking infinite thoughts and expressing them in finite words. For us, words are sacrosanct.

For others to say cruel and untrue things about us is particularly painful.

When Seed & GIFT launched the Clean Speech Project a couple of years ago, we felt it was important. Now we see it is necessary. There are the resources, the 30-day videos and the parent-child learning across schools. Over 75 schools and shuls are getting involved in learning about the power of speech and choosing positive over negative speech, with over 1500 people signed up to the 30-day videos. It is a pleasure to work with the US this year with their fantastic “Shema” resource too. For more information, to receive the daily videos or to see the 30-day study book, visit www.cleanspeech.co.uk.



Who is King David's Heir?

Sefer Melachim (Kings) I: Chapter 1



**PNINA
SAVERY**

Ma'ayan and
US Educator

Sefer Melachim begins with a description of King David at the end of his life. He is weak and constantly feels cold. With no succession plan in place, rebellion is on the horizon.

Adoniyah, one of David's sons, is set on crowning himself king. He parades around on a chariot with fifty men running before him. He gathers supporters and offers sacrifices at Ein-Rogel, preparing to put himself on the throne. Interestingly, Ein-Rogel is outside the city walls of Jerusalem which indicates that Adoniyah is still not ready to announce himself as king.

As David's oldest living son, he seems a likely candidate for the throne. Perhaps it is wrong to fault Adoniyah for assuming he is the heir to the throne. He also has some important supporters, including Yoav, the head of David's army, and Evyatar the Kohen. However, as Rabbi Alex Israel (Alon Shvut, Israel) points out, his camp lacks one crucial component: a prophet. Adoniyah wishes to be king of Israel, yet he has no channel through which he can communicate with God.¹

In the meantime, the prophet Natan approaches Batsheva, the wife of David and mother of Shlomo (Solomon). David had always intended that Shlomo should become king after him, although he never announced this formally. Informing David of what Adoniyah has done, both Natan and Batsheva urge David to act.

Despite his advanced years, David instructs his loyal supporters to take Shlomo to Gichon and crown him as king. The choice of location is not a coincidence. The pool at Gichon is the main water source within Jerusalem and very near to David's palace. This allows for a public coronation and a celebratory parade back to the palace afterwards. In contrast to Adoniyah's illicit gathering outside the city, Shlomo's coronation is within the city, gaining an extra seal of official approval. Of course, the inclusion of Natan the prophet in Shlomo's coronation also

gives confirmation that this is in accordance with Divine will.

The topography of the two locations causes the celebrations to echo down to Adoniyah's group in the valley at Ein-Rogel. Once they realise that David has spoken, crowning Shlomo as king, all his supporters disperse, leaving Adoniyah alone.

Shlomo's first act as king is to have mercy on his brother Adoniyah, despite his attempt to usurp the throne. He states that Adoniyah will be unpunished provided he remains loyal to Shlomo from now on.

In the final section of our chapter, Adoniyah submits and bows before his newly-crowned younger brother, Shlomo. The phrase "King Shlomo" is repeated four times in only three verses (1:51-53). This sends a clear message: Shlomo is the uncontested king of Israel.

Shlomo's first act as king is to have mercy on his brother Adoniyah, despite his attempt to usurp the throne.

¹ Alex Israel, *I Kings: Torn in Two*, p.20.

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT YITRO

2-3 FEBRUARY | 24 SHEVAT

The Fifth Commandment



**AURELLE AND EZRA
DIAMANT**

Youth Directors at Mill Hill Synagogue

In Parashat Yitro, we are given the 10 Commandments as a Jewish people, all together at Mount Sinai. A question that is often asked is as follows: the first five commandments are between us and God and the second five are to do with our interactions with other people. Why would the fifth commandment, which is the commandment of honouring

one's parents, be located in the first set of five? Seemingly, this commandment, since it is to do with our relationships with other people, should not be in the first five, where the consistent theme is our relationship with God. Our Rabbis say that God likes to be present in a house where parents are honoured and, on the other hand, God does not wish to be present in a house where parents are not honoured.

For those of us fortunate enough to have parents, it is important to recognise that they have played a huge role in our lives from the very beginning. Obviously, God also played an essential role in our creation, but if we don't also give thanks to our parents for everything they have done for us, it is somewhat like a whole football team working together

to win a match and the fans not recognising the importance of the central midfielder's passes that set up all the different and intricate goals. If the fans did this, it is likely that the whole team would take offence. Since God worked with our parents to create us, we must recognise and honour all three of them as partners in our creation. Since our parents are two of the partners, this takes them out of the classification of just 'other people' and puts them in a place where they are to be given even more honour and respect. All in all, it is important that we always remain humble and appreciate that God and our parents brought us into this world, and we must never forget this. Just remember to always say thank you and be appreciative of your parents.

Spot the difference!

Moshe had to present the tablets to the Jewish people twice. Can you spot the 10 differences between the 2 pictures?



