

Parashat Yitro • פ' יתרו

PARNESS HAYOM SHEVAT

These Days of Learning have been dedicated to the memory of the following by members of their family.

2 Shevat

Drazin Family in memory of mother, Gertrude Drazin (Gittel bat Harav Moshe Halevi z'l)

9 Shevat

Russell & Steven Samuels in memory of grandfather, Aron Eichenbaum (Shmuel Aharon ben Yisrael Lev z'l)

11 Shevat

Dr. Hyman Schipper in memory of David Jacob Rubenstein (Dovid Yaacov ben Yecheziel z'l)

14 Shevat

Mr. & Mrs. Aron Lieberman in memory of mother-in-law and mother Esther bat Shiah Zeileg, z'l

17 Shevat

Bobby Shaul in memory of father, Norman Shaul (Natan Zev ben Nachman Halevi z'l)

For more information on the KTM Parness Hayom Project, please call our office at 514 486 5718.



Truth and Peaceful Judgment

We read in this week's *parasha* about Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law, who joined *Am Yisrael*. The Torah writes, "Yitro...heard all that Hashem did." Rashi explains that Yitro heard about *Am Yisrael's* redemption from Egypt and their battle against Amalek, and after hearing of these events he decided to join *Am Yisrael*. Upon his arrival, Yitro meets with Moshe who tells him about "all that Hashem did to Pharaoh and Egypt." Yitro responds by undergoing the process of conversion: "*Vayichad Yitro*" (18:9). According to the *Midrash Tanchuma*, this phrase should be read as, "*Vayihad Yitro*" ("Yitro became Jewish"). Yitro offers sacrifices, and the entire leadership of *Am Yisrael* joins in the festivities.

Afterward, Yitro observed the legal system that was in place among *Benei Yisrael*, and advises Moshe to change it. Instead of Moshe judging the entire nation independently, he urges, Moshe should instead appoint judges to preside over most of the cases, with only the most difficult cases coming to Moshe's "Supreme Court."

The question arises, how did Yitro dare to suggest to *Am Yisrael* how their justice system should look? With all due respect to Yitro, who converted to Judaism, he was still a newcomer to the Jewish people. We would have expected Yitro to first spend a few years in yeshiva studying Torah before beginning to offer advice!

The Midrash explains that Yitro worshipped all the various forms of idolatry that existed at that time, and eventually determined that there was no deity like the God of Israel. Yitro then proclaimed, "*Baruch Hashem*" ("Blessed is God"). The Midrash further relates that over the course of history, there have been four people who expressed themselves in a certain way, and had other people spoken this way, they would have been subjected to scorn and derision. These four

men were Moshe, Nevuchadnetzar, Shelomo and Yitro. Yitro's declaration was "I now know that Hashem is greater than all gods, because the matter in which they [the Egyptians] acted wickedly [they were punished]" (18:11). This means that the Egyptians used water in their efforts to destroy *Am Yisrael*, and in the end, it was they who were destroyed through water (with the splitting of the sea).

We can now return to our original question, of why the suggestion of a person who had just recently converted was taken seriously. Yitro was a person who (similar to Avraham Avinu) sought to determine who ruled the world. He did not rest, but rather inquired about and studied one idolatrous belief after another, until he decided that the truth does not lie in paganism. After hearing of the miracles that Hashem performed in Egypt, he decided to look into Judaism. What guided Yitro throughout this entire process was the quality of truth. And if the truth entailed conversion to Judaism, then Yitro was prepared to convert. Accordingly, Yitro may, indeed, teach others of how justice is supposed to look, that justice means a system based upon truth. Moreover, he teaches us of what a judge is supposed to look like ("despises profit..." - 18:21). This is, in essence, what he tried to suggest to Moshe. And this may also be the reason why his suggestion was accepted.

The prophet Zecharya admonishes, "...and render truth and peaceful judgment in your gates" (Zecharya 8:16). One of the roles of the judicial system is to bring peace among people. Yitro similarly tells Moshe, "If you do this, and God commands you, you shall be able to withstand, and this entire nation, too, shall come to its place **with peace**" (18:23). The process of judgment ultimately leads to peaceful relations among *Am Yisrael*. This is a critical message that had to be conveyed before the Revelation at Sinai, when, as Rashi famously comments, the nation encamped "as one person with one heart," in a state of peace and unity - and only then were able to receive the Torah.

Shabbat Shalom, Izhak Lauber
 iolizhak@walla.com

TRIBUTE CARDS

With your donation of \$18.00 or more KTM will send a card to mark the occasion of a birth, anniversary, engagement, marriage, speedy recovery, holiday greetings, birthday, or in memory of.

22th of Shevat 5770 • February 6, 2010
 Shabbat Begins: 4:50pm • Shabbat Ends: 5:54pm
 Haftara: Isaiah 6:1-7:6, 9:5-6



Halacha MiTzion with Rav Shlomo Aviner

Giving Money to Beggars

Q: When I visit the Kotel, there are so many people asking for money, should I give money to the beggars? What about people on the street? What about

people who knock on my door and ask for money?

A: There are various issues involved: Most Beggars are Swindlers - The Halachah is that we do not give money to beggars until we clarify that they are truly poor. This is a "Takanat Chazal" (Ruling of our Sages) since most beggars are swindlers. This ruling is found in the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 251:10) and it applies to this day.

Rabbis estimate that ninety percent of people who ask for money today are swindlers. If someone asks for money we do not give it until he provides verification from a reliable Rabbi.

If someone asks for food, however, we give him immediately. What if he is being deceptive? It is a potentially life-threatening situation, and we therefore provide food without delay. Today, most beggars in Israel do not ask for food because there are many soup kitchens, and if you offer them food, they say that they prefer money.

Is Giving Tzedakah to someone who is not poor a Mitzvah? - The halachic authorities discuss if one fulfills the mitzvah of giving tzedakah if the recipient is in fact not poor. They point to the Gemara in Baba Batra (9a and see Rishonim and Achronim) and they also discuss whether the intention of the giver matters, but for certain he loses out on the mitzvah by giving that money to someone who is not truly poor.

Perhaps you will say that giving tzedakah is still worthwhile even if the person is not poor since it strengthens one's personal character traits (tikkun midot), as the Rambam explained in his commentary to Pirkei Avot (3:15):, that by performing an act over and over, one will achieve proper characteristic traits.

This, however, does not occur when one is performing an act which is not beneficial. A person is cruel if he does not give to the poor, but he is not kind if he gives to the wealthy. We have

to give to truly poor people. A person should not buckle under emotional pressure from a beggar: I have many children and a husband who is sick, you have a kippah but you are not really observant, you give a shekel and they throw it down, etc... If a person was poor before he asked for money at the Kotel, after a day he would no longer be considered poor: They collect 1000 shekels a day!

Rabbinic Verification - Even providing rabbinic verification is problematic today. Anyone can print a Rabbi's letter or signature off the internet in thirty seconds. One time some people from a tzedakah organization in Ashdod came and asked for my signature. I did not know them and asked if they had other Rabbis' signatures. They told me that they had the support of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I said: If so, I will blindly support it. Please send me the letter. When I received it, I saw that in the signature there was an extra "alef" in the last name "Schneersohn" and instead of being signed by the last Rebbe - Ha-Rav Menachem Mendel, it was signed by the previous Rebbe - Ha-Rav Yosef Yitzchak, who died almost sixty years ago! It was a forgery!

Often times there are people who request money for yeshivot or organizations which do not exist, never existed, and will never exist. One time I signed a letter in support of giving money to the poor. I found out that they were giving \$1000 to anyone about to be drafted into "Nachal Ha-Charedi" (Ultra-Orthodox unit in the army) to convince them not to join. They claimed they were poor: They were in great spiritual poverty if they were about to join Tzahal. I called and requested my name be removed from the letter, but they did not. I called again, no response. I called again, no response. I sent a letter, no response. I sent a letter from a lawyer and they called: "Why not talk like a mensch? Come on, let's talk," etc...

We have to be extremely careful about where we give our money.

In sum: We only give tzedakah to people who we can verify are poor or to trustworthy organizations. Give to one, two, three trustworthy organizations. It is not possible to provide for every poor person in any event. Most beggars are not evil people, they are mentally and emotionally unstable. We do not judge them, but we only give tzedakah to genuinely poor people.



Famous Jewish Personalities with Izhak Lauber

"ארץ ישראל איננה דבר חיצוני, קנין חיצוני
לאומה רק בתור אמצעי למטרה של התאגדות
הכללית והחזקת קיומה החמרי או אפילו
הרוחני. ארץ ישראל היא חטיבה עצמית,
קשורה בקשר חיים עם האומה..."
(ספר אורות)

Eretz Israel is not just the place of the physical ingathering of Am Israel. It is also connected to the soul of the nation.

HaRav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook (1865-1935) was the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, the founder of the Religious Zionist Yeshiva "Merkaz HaRav", a Jewish thinker, Halachist, Kabbalist and a renowned Torah scholar.

He is known in Hebrew as HaRaAYaH or simply as "HaRav". He was one of the most celebrated and influential

Rabbis of the 20th century.

HaRav Kook was a Rabbi in Latvia and he made Aliyah on the 17th of Av (1904). HaRav Kook wrote books that spoke about Zionism from a philosophical point of view. He was appointed as the Chief Rabbi of Yaffo and after the First World War he became the Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi of Jerusalem.

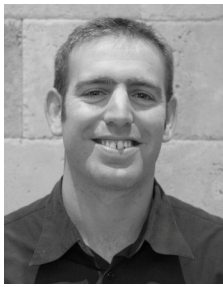
HaRav Kook established the "Rabnanut" institution in Israel and also established Yeshivat Merkaz Ha-Rav.

His writings and halachic rulings on topics such as Hilchot of Melachim are considered monumental.

He is considered as one of the leaders of many streams of Modern Orthodoxy and Religious Zionism.

Follow the following link for a biographical video of Harav Kook's life:

<http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/154078>
iolizhak@walla.com



A Point to Ponder – Blessed Rainfall - Rav Ido Tauber

“A rise of 91 cm in just the last two months . In all, we have seen a rise of one meter since the beginning of the season.”

How wonderful it was to hear these words spoken by the official who measures the water level of Lake Kinneret, Israel’s main water source. After two weeks of abundant rainfall, and after an extended period during which the lake’s water level was not measured (due to a strike, of course), the level rose significantly, much to everyone’s joy, with still two months of winter remaining.

“*Miflas ha’Kinneret*” (“the level of Kinneret”) is like a holy codeword in the State of Israel, which symbolizes far more than simply the height of the water. The water level of the Kinneret directly impacts upon the State’s water supply, the monthly water costs of every citizen, the decision of whether or not the State should purchase water from Turkey, and other issues.

The Torah tells us that after the world’s creation, vegetation had still not begun to grow in the world because there was still no rain in the world. How is this possible? Rain is, after all, an inherent part of the natural order, an act of God. Why, then, wasn’t rain created during the six days of creation?

The Torah answers, “because Hashem had not brought rain upon the earth, and there was no man to work the land” (Bereishit 2:5). As long as there were no people in the

world, there was no rain in the world. Why?

The Gemara in Masechet Chulin explains that the Almighty wanted human beings to themselves understand and recognize the benefit of rain, how

Important it is for the world, and then pray for it so it would fall. The growth of trees and flowers would not occur automatically. The person who sows must undergo the process of recognizing Hashem and understanding that only He can cause vegetation to grow, through his prayers. Working the land requires resolute faith. Who knows what would happen to the seeds buried in the ground if they did not receive sufficient rainfall? The entire concept of rainfall is thus one of faith in Hashem.

In regions with full reservoirs and rivers (such as Quebec, for example), it is hard to understand the full significance of this concept of rainfall. But specifically in *Eretz Yisrael*, where all the water sources and life generally depend upon the amount of rain that falls, the concept is abundantly clear.

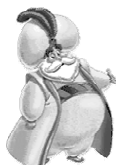
Rain poses a great test of faith. It arouses the individual to plead and pray to his Creator, and it thus symbolizes the strong and special bond that exists between Hashem and His chosen people, specifically in the chosen land.

The significance of blessed rainfall, then, relates to more than the mundane issue of water supply. It is truly a bountiful, spiritual blessing for *Am Yisrael* and the entire world. Indeed, before we rush to measure the water level in the Kinneret, we must first take with us a *siddur* and a Tehillim...

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Rosh Chodesh Adar Sunday, February 14, 2010

4:00-6:00 P.M.

Beth Israel Beth Aaron Synagogue
6800 Mackle C-S-L

Admission: \$5 (max per family-\$13)

Pizza & Drinks for sale.



Purim 5770

KTM invites you to a Festive Purim Seudah

Featuring: Singing, dancing, entertainment & special surprises!

Sunday, February 28, 2010

@ Beth I srael Beth Aaron Congregation
Mincha 4pm, Followed by Seudah

\$37/Adult, \$20/kids 3-12

After February 18: \$45/adult, \$27/kids 3-12

Catering by Blossom Kosher Catering

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WINTER SESSION @ KTM

8:15-9pm	MONDAYS JANUARY 11 • 18 • 25 • FEB. 1 • 8	
	The Ramban on the Torah with Rav Ido Tauber This class will explore the unique commentary of the Ramban, including topics on faith and philosophy according to the weekly parasha.	
	TUESDAYS JANUARY 12 • 19 • 26 • FEB. 2 • 9	
	Parashat Hashavua with Rav Yishai Lisner An in depth look at the weekly parasha using the commentaries of our sages and other Torah commentaries with a special focus on relating these teaching to our daily lives.	
	WEDNESDAYS JANUARY 13 • 20 • 27 • FEB. 3 • 10	
	"Orach Chaim" with Rav Ido Tauber Exploration of Jewish law that pertain to daily life using the Shulchan Aruch and Midrash Brurah.	
9:15 - 10PM	THURSDAYS JANUARY 14 • 19 • 26 • FEB. 4 • 11	
	Parashat Hashavua with Rav Ido Tauber For or CEGEP and University Students.	
	Daily Maariv: Monday-Thursday @ 9pm	
	Individual Study Groups with Kollel Staff Study groups: Bekiut Gemera, Classic Jewish Philosophy and Halacha. Please call our office to join an existing group. Monday-Thursdays.	
WOMEN'S BEIT MIDRASH	Purim and the Parasha with Rav Yishai Lisner Explore the deeper meaning of Purim and in relation to the current week's parasha. TUES., 9:30am FEB. 9 • 16 • 23	
	NEW Women's Gemara Shiur with Rav Yishai Lisner Explore the exciting world of gemara and learn key tools for navigating through classic sugiyot. Preparation and shiur in masechet Shabbat. WED., 8-9pm @ The Lisner Home (7121 Kildare Ave.)	
	Tehilim Group Completion of the entire Book of Tehilim and prayer for those who are ill. TUES. 10:30am & WED. 4:00pm	

**Montreal Community Educational Centre
Kollel Torah MiTzion**


is happy to invite you to a reception and drawing at which you may be the lucky winner of two first class airline tickets to anywhere in the continental United States.
Flight must be completed by December 31, 2010
Proceeds will go to fund Student Programs

Reception on
Thursday, February 18, 2010 at 7:00 PM
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in the Lieberman Beit Midrash of the Hebrew Academy
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Grand Prize
Two first class airline tickets to anywhere in the continental U.S.
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1 Prize of \$ 1,000
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Cost \$ 50.00 per ticket (\$350 for 8)
(Cash, check and all major credit cards accepted.)
Call or email to purchase tickets.




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"The World of the Jewish Woman"
A Series for Women Beginning:
Monday, February 15, 2010 @ 8pm
@ KOLLEL TORAH MITZION

Birth Control Options in Halacha
Rabbi Elchanan Lewis

*Rabbinical Counselor-English Department
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Born and bred in Yerushalaim, Rabbi Lewis studied at the Bet El Yeshiva and got his rabbinic ordination from the chief rabbinate. He has served as a rabbinic director of the OU Torah center in Kharkov, Ukraine, and as a community rabbi and Rosh Kollel in Perth Australia. He has also taught at Yeshivat Benei Zvi and Ohr Torah Stone and currently teaches at Midreshet Yeud for girls. Rabbi Lewis serves as part of the www.yeshiva.org.il ask-the-rabbi rabbinic responsa team and is a full time rabbinic counselor at the Puah Institute as the associate director of the English department with responsibility for the USA region.

Admission \$10

Kollel Torah Mitzion has a core faculty of graduates from Hesder Yeshivot in Israel who come here to serve as teachers and role models in our community. The core of the Kollel is the Beit Midrash which features a full schedule of classes as well as a drop-in center with a warm atmosphere where all, regardless of background, feel comfortable.

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Bringing a taste of Israel to Montreal...

Rosh Kollel: Rav Yishai Lisner
President: Rafi Faust
Executive Director: Eddie Shostak

