

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT YITRO

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

AH – BARUCH HASHEM!

There is a famous story of a man called Mo that went to borrow a horse from his neighbour, Shmuli. "Sure, you can borrow my horse," replied Shmuli, "But there is one thing you have to know about this horse. He is trained to start when you say 'Baruch Hashem' (thank G-d) and he stops when you say 'Shema Yisrael'."

Mo, thanked Shmuli for his kindness and set out starting to practice on the horse. Sure enough every time he said Baruch Hashem the horse started to trot, and whenever he said Shema Yisrael it stopped.

After a short practice he felt confident enough to start his journey.

Three hours into his journey he notices that at the end of the road he is riding along there is a steep cliff. Mo tries to veer the horse into a different path, but the horse seems adamant at going ahead. Mo tries to remember the word needed to stop the horse. "Ashrei yoshvei vetecha," he squeaks desperately. The horse keeps going. "Um - Adon Olam" he intones. The horse keeps going. "Eh - Aleinu L'shabeiach." But the horse keeps galloping. Now fearful that he is about to die, Mo does what any good Jew would do when confronted with certain death. He screams out, "Shema Yisrael." As trained, the horse stops suddenly -- barely two feet from the edge of the cliff. Shaking like a leaf, Mo pulls out his handkerchief and wipes the sweat from his forehead. "Phew !!" he exclaims, "Baruch Hashem !!"

The famous words of Baruch Hashem can be heard in almost every Jews conversation. By stating Baruch Hashem we constantly bring Hashem into our lives, and recognise His Kindness towards us. So who was the first to say Baruch Hashem

after the Jews left Egypt? Was it Moshe, Aharon or perhaps Miriam?

The Torah states that after Moshe told Yitro all that had happened to them and the Egyptians, Yitro said, 'Baruch Hashem! Who has saved you from Egypt and from Pharaoh.' (18:8- 10)"

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (94a) states that it was taught in the name of R' Papayus: It was a disgrace for Moshe and the 600,000 Jews that left Egypt that they did not say "Baruch Hashem," until Yitro came and said "Baruch Hashem."

The Gemara continues; "Va-yichad Yitro (18:9)."

What is the meaning of the unusual word "Va-Yichad?"

Rav says: It means he circumcised himself. Shmuel says: It means that his flesh became full of Goosebumps (he got the shivers after hearing what Hashem had done to Egypt). As people say: For ten generations after his conversion, one should never disdain a gentile in front of a convert.

This Gemara leaves us with a few questions. First, surely Moshe and the Bnei Yisrael said Baruch Hashem, they had just sung the most elevated song in history – Az Yashir – which was full of praise and exultation of Hashem? Why then does the Gemara criticise them?

Second, what is the connection between Yitro saying Baruch Hashem and the next part of the Gemara which states that according to Shmuel he was shivering when hearing what happened to the Egyptians?

The Mishna in Berachot (9:5) states, one is obligated to bless Hashem regarding the bad just as one does regarding the good.

It is significant that Chazal do not obligate us to thank Hashem for bad just as one thanks for good. To thank in Hebrew is Le-Hodot. To bless is Le-Vareich. To thank Hashem for something one is not really thankful for would be dishonest.

What is the difference between to thank and to bless? What do we mean by blessing

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18:03pm

TAL wishes Mazal Tov to *Jacob Boyden & Lea Ora Rowe* on their upcoming wedding

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Comic & Quiz

This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Sheimot - Please dispose of accordingly

Hashem?

When we say, "Baruch Hashem," as we do at the beginning of every Beracha we make, we are not thanking Hashem, but rather recognizing and acknowledging that Hashem is the origin of all sustenance: Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the Universe... - You are The Source from which all sustenance flows.

By blessing Hashem for the good and for the bad, we acknowledge that Hashem is the source of everything. Ultimately, we realize that even what we perceive as bad also comes from Hashem, and thus must, in the grander scheme of things, be for our good, even if it's sometimes difficult to see how. As the famous expression goes, "Gam zu le-tova/Even this is for the better." Still, because it feels bad for us, it is not possible to obligate one to thank Hashem for it. By blessing Hashem "even when it hurts," we affirm that our belief in Hashem is stronger than our feelings, emotions and perceptions.

When Moshe described the destruction of Egypt, Yitro according to Shmuel, found it painful and distressing to hear. This country had once been his home. Although he had by all means distanced himself from their evil and corrupt ways, in his heart he had hoped that they would

succumb to Moshe's request for freedom, thereby recognizing Hashem and saving themselves.

Things hadn't worked out how he had hoped. Nevertheless he garnered up enough courage and conviction to state "Baruch Hashem". These words could both allow room for his pain, yet at the same time recognize that this too was from Hashem.

When the Bnei Yisrael saw the destruction of the Egyptians at the sea, they immediately sang out in praise of Hashem, but says Rav Papayus, they never said "Baruch Hashem." Their song focused strictly on the salvation and miracles of Hashem. But, we never find them blessing Hashem for everything they went through - not only for the salvation, but for the slavery and subjugation as well. They failed to recognize, at least verbally, that Hashem is not only the one who saved them from their oppressors, but He is also the One who put them there in the first place.

It was specifically through Yitro, who according to Shmuel was shivering when hearing this news and nevertheless connected this to praise Hashem, that we learn the importance of saying Baruch Hashem.

We must remember that the Baruch part comes to recognise Hashem as the ultimate source of everything, the good

and the bad.

A true story is told about the first printer in Bnei Brak. After enjoying many years of a monopoly on all the printing needs of the town, a second competing shop opened up. The first printer went into the new shop and shared with the newcomer all the tips of the trade - which suppliers were reliable and which clients could be trusted to pay on time, and so on. When his son asked him why he did that, he explained, "My livelihood is decreed in Heaven. It is in my best interest that he should be successful, because then I will get my income for only half the work, and will have more time for my learning."

When a person such as this says Baruch Hashem, they really mean it and recognise Hashem as the source of everything; both their success and their loss.

Our first Prayer of the new week - Arvit on Motsei Shabbat begins with the Chazan saying Barchu Et Hashem Hamevorach.

The Chidah z"l says in the name of Rav Hai Gaon, that a great, tried and true Segulah for a successful week is to draw out his response of "Baruch Hashem Hamevorach" on Motsei Shabbat in Arvit.

We begin our week by internalising the truth that Hashem is the source of everything that happens to us.

Ahh Baruch Hashem!

Shabbat Shalom



RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

WHY DOESN'T G-D LET US SEE HIM?

At the heart of the revelation at Mount Sinai, described in Parashat Yitro, lies a remarkable dialogue between G-d and Bnei Yisrael. According to the Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 29:9), the people pleaded, "We desire to see our King!" Their longing to see G-d stemmed from a deep yearning to connect with Him in a tangible way. Yet G-d's response was clear: "You cannot handle seeing Me."

The Torah recounts how G-d revealed Himself amidst thunder, lightning, and a thick cloud. Even this limited revelation overwhelmed the people, who ultimately begged Moshe, "You speak with us, and we will hear, but let not G-d speak with us, lest we die" (Shemot 20:16).

This raises a question: why would G-d conceal Himself? Wouldn't seeing Him strengthen faith and deepen connection? The answer lies in the nature of relationships. Seeing is external and fleeting. While sight might evoke momentary awe, it does not foster true understanding or connection. Listening, by contrast, is a deeper, more meaningful act. By listening, we open ourselves to understanding another's thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

This is why G-d says, in essence, "Listen to Me, don't look at Me." His hiddenness is not a sign of distance but an invitation to draw closer in a profound way. Through listening to His words, we learn His values, His purpose, and His desires, enabling a relationship far deeper than what sight alone could achieve.

This principle also underpins the value of

modesty. Modesty teaches that what truly matters about a person is not what is visible but what can be understood and appreciated through deeper engagement. Modesty, both in behaviour and appearance, conveys the message: "Don't focus on the external. To truly know me, you must listen and understand who I am."

At Sinai, G-d exemplified divine modesty by choosing not to fully reveal Himself, instead inviting His people to hear His voice. The message is timeless: meaningful relationships—whether with G-d or others—are not built on what is seen but on what is truly heard and internalised. By prioritising substance over appearance, we foster deeper, more enduring connections. Listening leads to understanding and understanding builds relationships of depth and authenticity. This is the gift and challenge of a life centred on true connection.



RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

HUMILITY

The main subject of this week's reading is the historic revelation, where G-d descended upon Mount Sinai to give the Jewish People the Torah, the receptacle of divine wisdom.

The Midrash tells us that various mountains in the region came before G-d to request that the holy Torah be given upon them. "Surely," argued the mountains Carmel and Tavor, "it is more appropriate for one of us to be the setting for G-d to reveal Himself to His people and give them the Torah. After all, we are the tallest and the largest peaks around!" Nevertheless, G-d chose to give the Torah on the small and humble Mount Sinai, which never "dreamed" that it would deserve having such an honour.

The moral that we can learn from G-d's choice of venue for the giving of the Torah, is that if we wish to absorb the Torah and live according to its teachings, we must emulate the trait of humility that was personified by Mount

Sinai. The reason for this is because one who is humble enables the divine presence to reside within him, and hence, be able to absorb the divine wisdom. Conversely, a haughty person who thinks: "I can do it all myself, I am in control, I am the sole decider of my affairs, I plan my life..." will find himself spiritually stranded. Since essentially, he does not want to accommodate the divine presence in his life, and would rather "manage by himself", G-d leaves him "to his own devices" and he is left stranded.

Additionally, often an element of haughtiness may inhibit a person's level of faith in G-d. By not submitting to the fact that he lacks control over his livelihood, health, ability to have children etc., a person will come to doubt the innate faith that every Jew inherits genetically from his forefathers. Since he pushes G-d away from his life, he therefore finds himself doubting.

Life presents us with a variety of different situations, trials and tribulations. If when facing these circumstances, we lower our heads in humility and,

simultaneously, lift our hearts heavenwards in prayer for assistance, we will experience "living with G-d". Once, when under pressure to pay for my present apartment and prior to selling my previous one, I was convinced that the correct thing would be to sell at any price, just in order not to lose the purchase. Nevertheless, I decided to take advice from my Rosh Hayeshivah, who gave me a blessing to be able to borrow the money. I went downstairs and miraculously, found someone who offered to lend me the money that I needed.

When we are busy with our next business deal or trying to ensure a place for our child in a new school for the upcoming year, finding a parking spot or thinking what to make for dinner, let us try to be aware that we are not self-sufficient, but rather, we are reliant on G-d. Let us lift our hearts heavenwards and ask for divine inspiration. Our haughtiness will disappear and our faith be restored, thereby imbuing us with the impetus to "live with G-d."

Shabbat shalom



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Is A Person Required To Say Asher Yatzar Every Time If Using The Bathroom Excessively Due To An Illness

If a person has a medical condition and must use the bathroom often, would he have recite the Beracha of Asher Yatzar (the Beracha recited after performing one's bodily functions) each time he leaves the bathroom?

This question arises in situations, for example, where a patient requires a colonoscopy and is given a certain type of drink a day beforehand makes him go the bathroom often in order to clear his system. More commonly, this issue is relevant for anyone taking laxatives who visits the bathroom very frequently during that period.

One view, cited in the work Halachot Ketanot, maintains that one recites the Beracha only when his system is completely cleared out. Since the patient knows that he will soon need to use the bathroom again, he should not recite Asher Yatzar until after the completion of the entire process.

However, both the Chid"א (Rav Chayim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806) and Rav Chayim Palachi (Rabbi of Izmir, Turkey, 19th century) disagree. In their view, so long as a person does not feel the need to use the bathroom right after performing his bodily functions, he recites Asher Yatzar. Even if one knows that he will soon have to return to the

bathroom, since at the moment he exited the bathroom he does not feel the need to perform his bodily functions, he recites the Beracha. Halacha indeed follows this position of the Chid"א and Rav Chayim Palachi.

Therefore, in the situations described above, one recites Asher Yatzar each time he leaves the bathroom, provided that at that moment he does not feel the need to use the bathroom again. If one leaves the bathroom and immediately feels that he must use it again, then he returns to the bathroom and recites the Beracha afterward, when he no longer feels any need to perform his bodily functions.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Yitro

Hearing of the miracles that Hashem 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 Rabbeinu, Yitro suggests that subsidiary judges be appointed to adjudicate smaller matters, leaving Moshe free to attend to larger issues. Moshe accepts his advice. The Jewish People arrive at Mount Sinai,

where Hashem offers them the Torah. Once they accept, Hashem 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, Hashem's voice emanates from the smoke-enshrouded mountain, and He speaks to the Jewish People, giving them the Ten Commandments:

1. Believe in Hashem.
2. Do not worship other "gods".
3. Do not use Hashem's name in vain.
4. Observe Shabbat.
5. Honor your parents.

6. Do not murder.
7. Do not commit adultery.
8. Do not kidnap.
9. Do not testify falsely.
10. Do not covet.

After receiving the first two commandments, the Jewish People, overwhelmed by this experience of the Divine, request that Moshe relay Hashem's word to them. Hashem instructs Moshe to caution the Jewish People not to draw close to the mountain or touch any part of it.

Rabbi Sinclair,
Seasonsofthemoon.com

Q

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?

A

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 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.





NEW ACHIEVEMENTS AT TAL 2024/2025

In addition to the **weekly 400 students** and **young professionals** attending TAL programs, this year has seen TAL grow tremendously with the **following initiatives...**



TAL opened **NEW** location at London Bridge



Mother and babies visit to old age homes



New addition to Chazanut (sefardi). We now have Learn to Lead (Ashkenazi)



Weekly visits to JFS inspiring the students, with Jacob



New TAL Shadchanit - 62nd TAL Shidduch made - 180 babies born!



Additional year groups now coming to the TAL Centre after school with Rabbi Fisher

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