

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Prepared to Receive

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR
RABBI MOSHE DOVID ZEFFREN

Here is a fun game: imagine you are put on the committee for naming the *parshiyos* in the Torah. You have successfully worked through *Beshalach*. Now you have to choose a name which can represent the story of the gift of the Torah at Sinai. Someone pipes up, "How about we call it Yisro? Didn't he show up about then?" "Yisro!" you say in surprise, "Wasn't he a non-Jew? "Yeah!" says someone else, "and don't some opinions say that he didn't show up until after *Har Sinai*?" Indeed. Those are great points. Nevertheless, open up your *chumash* and there it is: *Parshas Yisro*.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe explains that the story of Yisro joining the Jews after hearing of the miraculous happenings in Egypt is meant to be an introduction to the receiving of the Torah. The Torah tells us how Yisro came to join the Jews: "And Yisro heard." Well, obviously he had heard and knew what was going on. He certainly didn't just happen to bump into the Jews during one of his wilderness retreats. Rav Wolbe explains that there are two types of hearing: Usually we only hear with our ears. Yisro also heard with his heart. Everyone in the world heard about what Hashem had done to Mitzrayim. Yisro was the only one sufficiently affected to pick up and do something.

This is the necessary prelude to the Torah. One can receive Torah only if he is ready to hear with his heart, to absorb lessons and

incorporate them in some way. In fact, this was one of the primary focuses of the *Mussar* discipline of which Rav Wolbe was a disciple: To sensitize and awaken hearts to be affected and changed by the Torah's lessons.

This is the time year that we relive *Har Sinai* and try to renew our commitment use our hearts to hear the lessons of the Torah. This year, in particular, is also a time where it seems important messages are being sent to us by Hashem. May we utilize our hearts to hear the messages and use them as calls to action, as Yisro did so many years ago at that crucial point in history. 🕊️

Shavuos SCHEDULE

Erev Yom Tov
Sunday, May 16

8:25PM
Mincha
Followed by seder limud & shiur from Rabbi Minster

9:35PM
Maariv

Tikun Leil Shavuos
Chavrusa learning and classes/shiurim throughout the night

INCLUDING:
2 CHABUROS WITH MAAREH MEKOMOS AND A SHIUR
CHABURAH #1: SHIUR PREP 1 AM-2 AM | SHIUR 2-2:30 AM
CHABURAH #2: SHIUR PREP 3 AM-4 AM | SHIUR 4-4:30 AM

First Day
Monday, May 17

5:40AM
Shachris
Hanetz 6:23AM

Second Day
Tuesday, May 18

7:00PM
Mincha
Followed by learning and Ne'ilas Hachag

9:37PM
Maariv

Shavuos Night Refreshments sponsored by Ego Ziv

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI MEIR MINSTER

Last week's *parasha*:

Q) Rashi tells us that *yovel* gets its name because of the *shofar* sound that heralds its arrival. Why is the blowing of the *shofar* so significant? There are several other significant themes of *yovel* that would seem to be more on target for the inspiration for a name?

A) It is interesting to note that Rashi adds that *yovel* is the only year that has its own name from the Torah. Although Rashi explains that the name is taken from the *shofar*, other commentaries, in fact, connect the name to the other elements of *yovel*. The *Ramban* and *Rabbenu B'chaya* explain that *yovel* is an expression of freedom and return: Each man returns to his ancestral land (return of fields) and family (freedom for Jewish slaves) and is free to conduct himself as he wants.

R' Moshe Shapiro, *zt"l*, explains that although they are clearly arguing about the etymology of the name, in actuality, they are all focusing on the same unifying theme of *yovel*. He develops this idea by first explaining that the *shofar* also represents the idea of returning and freedom. Based on the words of the *Rambam* (*Laws of Repentance* 3:4), he notes that the *shofar* awakens us and helps free us from the demands of the *yetzer harah* (evil inclination) and the distractions and falsehoods of the world we find ourselves in. More so, the *shofar* helps us reconnect with our essence and true self and to clearly see our mission in life and service to Hashem. These ideas can also be found in the writings of the *Maharal* and *Ramchal* and explain so deeply why the *shofar* plays such a significant role during the holiday of Rosh Hashana.

At the start of the *yovel* year, the *shofar* is blown again on Yom Kippur, heralding the

➡ CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE ➡

Sponsorship & feedback:
parasha@cincynollel.org

Sponsored by
Anonymomous
in the merit of Tinok ben Chana who should have a Refuah Shleima

Cincinnati Torah
is distributed weekly
to local shuls
and the community
e-mail list.



THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA


CONTINUED

return of fields and the release of slaves, but also reminding us that these changes are not meant to be experienced only at the superficial and outwardly level. The year should be spent re-examining our innermost self and re-aligning how we live our lives with our true potential. The return of the fields represents our resources, and the release of the slaves speaks to our efforts and achievements. The sound of the *shofar* calls to our inner spiritual core and helps us return our resources and efforts to their proper purpose. *Yovel* is not a celebration of release from work and fiscal responsibility, it is an opportunity that frees us from misplaced work and misused resources. It is meant to be a year where the intensity and re-focusing of Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and the Days of Repentance continue all year long.

This also helps us understand the *shofar's* connection to yet another holiday. Although our celebration of Shavuot does not involve the blowing of the *shofar* at all. The events of *mattan Torah* (the giving of the Torah) which we re-experience each year at this time, are very much connected to the *shofar*. The scene at Mount Sinai is described in this way: "The sound of the *shofar* grew continually much stronger, Moshe would speak, and Hashem responded to him with a voice" (*Shemos*


A SHINING EXAMPLE

Mrs. Jackie Bitton, an educator for many years for NCSY and JSU, relates how in one JSU class she taught in a public school in New York there were two girls that everyone knew did not get along. Sarah was not as wrapped up in it, but her counterpart, Maya, seemed to get annoyed every time she even heard Sarah's voice. After Mrs. Bitton discussed the power of words to create peace and harmony, and the inverse as well, in a class, Sarah came over to discuss her ongoing fight with Maya. "I honestly don't remember what started it. I wish there some way we could just move on." "I have an idea, but it won't be easy," said Mrs. Bitton. "I'm ready to try almost anything. I'm so sick of this!" "I think you should find out something she likes and make it for her. When we treat someone who has hurt us with kindness and love it can go a long way towards reconciliation." Sarah had

19:19). The Torah was given to us with the sound of the *shofar* heard strongly in the background. The message is clear, the Torah was given to us to help us connect to our true selves and actualize our real and full potential. As it says in *Pirkei Avos* (6:2), "...for you can have no **freer** man, than one who is involved in the study of Torah." 

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! If you would like to submit a question on the parasha, please email it to parasha@cincynkollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A BA'AL HATURIM FOR YOU

When the Torah lists the leaders of the respective tribes, we begin with the leader of the tribe of Reuven, Elitzur ben Sh'daioor, and end with the name of Achira ben Ainan, the leader of Naphtali. The name Elitzur means G-d is my "Tzur," my protector. The last name mentioned, "Ainan," is similar to the word *ayin* meaning eye and *anan* which means cloud. The *Ba'al Haturim* sees here a hint to the *passuk* in *Parashas Ha'azinu* that says "Yitz'renihu k'ishon eino," that G-d will protect the Jewish people like the pupil of the eye which was carried out through the clouds of G-d's glory. 

overheard sometime before that Maya had a soft spot for chocolate chip cookies and went out and gathered the ingredients for her first ever attempt at making chocolate chip cookies. The next day after class had already started, Mrs. Bitton gave Sarah a nod and Sarah slipped out to her locker and came back in with a beautifully arranged platter of chocolate chip cookies, dropped the platter on Maya's desk and hurried to her seat. Maya, not knowing what to think, read the note Sarah had left on the platter, "I want to say I'm sorry for whatever I have done to offend you. I'm really hoping we can be friends! Love, Sarah." Tearfully, Maya turned around and went to Sarah's desk and told her, "This is one of the nicest things anyone has ever done for me. Will you forgive me too?" Years have passed. Sarah is now married. And Maya is a regular guest at her Shabbos table. 

THE FALSE MESSIAHS OF JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

CRYPTO-SABBATIANS – NECHEMYAH CHIYUN (PART V)

By 1713, Amsterdam was home to two distinct and developed Jewish communities: a Sephardic *kehillah* comprised predominantly of Spanish and Portuguese Jews who were expelled from their homelands in 1492 and 1496 respectively, and an Ashkenazic *kehillah* which consisted mostly of refugees who fled Poland and Ukraine during the horrific Chmielnicki massacres of 1648-49. The two communities were independently led by two chief rabbis: Sephardic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Ayllon (1660-1728) and Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Ashkenazi (1656-1718), commonly known as Chacham Tzvi.

Nechemyah Chiyun introduced himself to the Sephardic communal leaders as an emissary of the Sephardic community of Jerusalem. Despite the fact that just one year earlier the Sephardic *kehillah* of Amsterdam hosted the chief rabbi of Jerusalem, Chacham Avraham Yitzchaki, who cautioned Rabbi Ayllon of a sly heretic named Nechemyah Chiyun from Eretz Yisrael, nevertheless Chiyun managed to conceal his identity and slip in undetected.

Presenting himself before the Sephardic communal leaders, Chiyun requested permission to distribute his *Divrei Nechemyah*. The communal board sent a copy of the book to the visiting scholar Rabbi Moshe Chagiz of Jerusalem (1671-1750), a prominent rabbi and an expert crypto-Sabbatian detective. Rabbi Chagiz easily detected the Sabbatian heresy and approached Chacham Tzvi with his findings. Chacham Tzvi agreed, and together, the two rabbis informed the Sephardic *kehillah* of their verdict and proceeded to launch a crusade against Chiyun and his book.

The Sephardic *kehillah*, of which many of its members were wealthy tradesmen and successful professionals, had always viewed itself as superior to the Ashkenazic *kehillah* of Polish and Ukrainian refugees. Chiyun understood this dynamic and skillfully persuaded the Sephardic communal members that Chacham Tzvi's ruling was only to aggravate them. Thus, the Sephardim rejected the ruling of Chacham Tzvi and Rabbi Chagiz and presented the questionable work to their own chief rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo Ayllon. Meanwhile, Rabbi Chagiz and Chacham Tzvi issued a *cherem* against Chiyun and his work. This *cherem* irritated the Sephardim, but irritation turned into vehement wrath when, after an inspection of the work, Rabbi Ayllon concluded that it was free of any Sabbatian beliefs. The Sephardim began rioting and the board members even had the audacity to issue a letter stating that no one from the Sephardic *kehillah* was permitted to interact with Chacham Tzvi in any way.

It is important to note that although Chacham Tzvi and Rabbi Ayllon found themselves on two opposite sides of a most bitter and violent controversy, the two rabbis had previously been on good terms and Chacham Tzvi held Rabbi Ayllon in high esteem. This is evident from the titles conferred upon Rabbi Ayllon in the very first responsum of *Shailos U-teshuvos Chacham Tzvi*. 