

OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT YITRO • 24 SHVAT 5781 FEBRUARY 6, 2021 • VOL 28 NO.15

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Moshe-San

"You shall not recognize the gods of others in My presence." (20:4)

As every believing Muslim knows, "Eid al-Adha, the Feast of Sacrifice dates from the historic event when Prophet Abraham was commanded by God, in the form of a dream vision, to sacrifice his son, Ishmail. But while he was in the act of sacrificing his Ishmail, God sent the angel Gabriel with a huge ram. Gabriel informed Abraham that his dream vision was fulfilled and instructed him to sacrifice the ram as a ransom for his son." Sound familiar? But it's not just Islam that has a rather different version of world history than us. Are you familiar with the belief that Moses actually came to Japan to learn the wisdom of ancient Shinto during the forty days that the Bible says he was on Mount Sinai, receiving the Torah from God? Or that the Japanese are one of the ten 'Lost Tribes' of Israel?

The supposed common ancestry of the Jews and the Japanese makes fanciful reading but maybe Hashem allowed this idea currency to rescue His People from what could have been a murderous encounter.

In Tokyo in 1941, Rabbi Moshe Shatzkes and the *Amshenover Rebbe* sat facing four Japanese admirals in dress uniforms. Heads shaven, arms folded stiffly across their chests, they sat motionless. The opening formalities were brief. In fact, considering the usual time-consuming graciousness that customarily began such formal encounters, they were just short of insulting. "We appreciate your

coming today; we appreciate your cooperating with us..." Then, suddenly, the opening shot. "What is the inherent evil of your people that our friends the Germans hate you so much?" None of the admirals, not even the one who had spoken, deigned to look at the objects of the question. The *Amshenover Rebbe* said to the translator in Yiddish, "Tell him the Germans hate us because we are Orientals."

Scarcely three seconds had passed between the posing of the question and this calm response. The admiral involuntarily shifted his eyes to look directly at the *rebbe*. "What does this mean? You are Asians? We are Asians!" "Yes," the *rebbe* agreed. "And you are also on the list. In Berlin, not many years ago, perhaps three or four, a young German girl fell in love with a fine young man, a Japanese man who was working at the Japanese Embassy. Naturally enough, the two young people wanted to marry, but such a marriage was forbidden by the laws of 'racial purity' that prohibit a fine German girl from marrying a Japanese person."

"You are lying," the first admiral said. "No," the *rebbe* said calmly. "Consider for yourself: What is the image of Hitler's 'master race'? How does he describe it? In films, documentaries, newspapers, who is shown bringing victory home to the German fatherland? Always, always, the so-called Aryans. Tall, broad-shouldered, blond hair, blue eyes. I am not six feet tall. I do not have blue eyes. I

don't have blond hair – even before it turned white. The reason they hate me, the reason they hate all of us, is because we don't fit the image of the Aryan master race."

He said no more. There was no need to point out the scarcity of tall, broad-shouldered, blond, blue-eyed Japanese. Silence. Then one of the admirals said, "Tell our Jewish guests there will now be a brief recess. Tell them we have been inexcusably inconsiderate in not allowing them time to rest from their long trip and in not offering proper refreshments. Tell them we will meet in two hours' time in a more comfortable place."

When, several hours later, the Jews were shown into a large conference room lined with windows – the atmosphere was entirely different. Again, the four admirals were lined up proudly on one side of a table but now, seated beside them were two newcomers, resplendent in long white robes and tall stiff black hats tied decorously under their chins. They were high-ranking Shinto priests. The discussion centered almost exclusively on religion: comparisons and contrasts between Shinto and Judaism, extended explanations of the theory of common origin that the Japanese were descended, in part, from one of the "ten lost tribes" that had

come to Japan, and the theory that Moses had actually come to Japan to learn the wisdom of ancient Shinto during the forty days when he was on Mount Sinai, receiving the Torah from G-d. For over an hour, Rabbi Shatzkes described the basic principles, ideas and ceremonies of the Jews.

It was late afternoon before the meeting drew to a close. As a final note, the *Amshenover Rebbe* repeated the gratitude of the refugees to the Japanese for taking them in and treating them so well. "Go back to your people," said one of the admirals. "Tell them they have nothing to fear. We Japanese will do our utmost to provide for your safety and peace. You have nothing to fear while in Japanese territory."

Apart from receiving the Torah on Sinai, Moshe was incidentally providing a scenario, which thousands of years later would rescue his great-grandchildren from the Nazi inferno – even if the Japanese got their geography a bit wrong and mistook Mount Sinai for Mount Fuji.

- Source: *"The Fugu Plan: The Untold Story Of The Japanese And The Jews During World War II"* by Marvin Tokayer

Ohrnet Magazine is a weekly Torah magazine published by Ohr Somayach Institutions
POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel - Tel +972-2-581-0315 · Email. ohr@ohr.edu

Contributing authors, editors and production team: Rabbi Nota Schiller – Rosh HaYeshiva, Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz - Rav of Kehillos Ohr Somayach, Avi Kauffman, Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein, Rabbi Reuven Lauffer, Rabbi Yaakov Meyers, Mrs. Rosalie Moriah, Rabbi Moshe Newman, Rabbi Shlomo Simon, Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair, Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, Mrs. Helena Stern.

©1992-2021 Ohr Somayach Institutions – All rights reserved – This publication contains words of Torah.
Please treat it with due respect. Editor's disclaimer – Ohrnet Magazine is not intended to be a source for halachic rulings. In any real and specific case one should consult a qualified halachic authority for ruling.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Yitro: *Pesachim* 79-85

Love Overcomes Fear

“And do not be amazed by this, since a *mitzvah aseh* (to do a specified act) overrides a *mitzvah lo ta’aseh* (not to do a specified act)...”

This is part of a *beraita* on our daf that explains why the prohibition in the Torah against breaking a bone of the *korban Pesach* applies even to a bone with meat inside it – despite the *mitzvah* to eat the meat of the *korban Pesach* and the well-established principle that “*aseh docheh lo ta’aseh*.”

Four verses are cited in the *beraita*: a *mitzvah aseh* to eat the meat of the *korban Pesach* on the first night of Pesach (Shemot 12:8), a *mitzvah lo ta’aseh* to not break a bone of the *korban Pesach* when brought in Nissan (Shemot 12:46), a *mitzvah lo ta’aseh* to not break a bone of the *korban Pesach Sheini* that is brought in Iyar when the Torah requires it (Bamidbar 9:12), and a verse teaching that all the laws of the first *korban Pesach* apply to the second one (Bamidbar 9:12).

The *beraita* states we *might have thought* that it would be permitted to break a bone of the *korban Pesach* to eat the meat inside, due to principle of *aseh docheh lo ta’aseh*. The conclusion, however, is that this is not so. Why not? The *beraita* explains that a seemingly redundant prohibition to not break a bone is written regarding *Pesach Sheini*. It is seemingly redundant since the Torah already taught this prohibition for the ‘first’ *korban Pesach* and also equated the laws of both Pesach offerings. The *beraita* concludes that this seeming redundancy is actually meant to teach that the Torah prohibits breaking a bone of the *korban Pesach* even to ostensibly fulfill the *mitzvah* to eat the meat within.

Torah commentaries ask: Why would we ever have thought that the principle of *aseh docheh lo ta’aseh* should apply in the case of breaking a bone to eat the meat inside the bone? We know that there are exceptions and limitations to this principle. For example, an *aseh* does not override both an *aseh* and a *lo ta’aseh*, such as on Yom Tov. Another example: an *aseh* is not *docheh* a *lo ta’aseh* that carries the severe punishment of *karet*, as taught in Yevamot 3a.

Another exception seems to be one that should apply in our case – the act of fulfilling the *aseh* and the act of transgression of the *lo ta’aseh* must be *simultaneous*. In other words, when one does the act of the *mitzvah aseh*, he is – at the same time – doing an act that the Torah normally forbids. This act cannot help fulfill the *mitzvah aseh* after the *mitzvah lo ta’aseh* has been violated. And that is what seems to be happening when breaking the bone and eating the meat. The *mitzvah lo ta’aseh* of breaking the bone occurs *first*, and *only afterwards* is the person able to take out the meat in order to fulfill the *mitzvah aseh* to eat the meat of the *korban Pesach*. So, why would we think that breaking the bone should be permitted?

One answer offered is that if the mitzvah *aseh* would not be possible to fulfill without transgressing the mitzvah *lo ta'aseh*, the mitzvah *aseh* overrides the mitzvah *lo ta'aseh* even if the mitzvah *aseh* is fulfilled only after the time of the mitzvah *lo ta'aseh*. Therefore, although not happening at the same time, the act of breaking a bone would be permitted in order to make possible the fulfillment of the mitzvah to eat the meat, including the meat inside the bone. Otherwise, the mitzvah could not be fulfilled correctly. (*Piskei Tosefot*)

A second reason is based on defining what constitutes *the time of the mitzvah*. When a person begins to do the act of a mitzvah, even though it is not complete, the beginning step is also considered as part of the mitzvah. Therefore, the mitzvah of eating the meat in the bone *begins* with breaking the bone in order to get to the meat inside. This satisfies the requirement for the act of mitzvah *aseh* to occur at the same time as the mitzvah *lo ta'aseh* is apparently transgressed. (*Rabbeinu Nissim and Nimukei Yosef*)

Aside from the legalistic derivation of *aseh docheh lo ta'aseh* found in *Shas*, a fascinating rationale for the principle of *aseh docheh lo ta'aseh* is found in the writings of the Ramban in his Commentary on the Chumash. He explains that a mitzvah *aseh* – an act of doing something that Hashem commands – stems from the mitzvah to love Hashem, whereas a mitzvah *lo ta'aseh* – refraining from an act that Hashem said not to do – stems from the mitzvah to fear Hashem. Since loving Hashem is relatively more important than fearing Him, there is a logical argument for a mitzvah *aseh* to override and supersede a mitzvah *lo ta'aseh*. (Of course, both the fulfillment of a mitzvah *aseh* and the non-transgression a mitzvah *lo ta'aseh* show *both* a great love for Hashem and a great fear and awe of Hashem.)

- Pesachim 85a

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Yitro: Just Winging It

In the introduction to the story of the Sinaitic Revelation, G-d caringly promises the Jewish People: “And I will carry you on wings (*kanaf*) of eagles and I will bring you to Me” (Ex. 19:4). Yet, another verse describing G-d’s tender affection for the Jews reads: “Like an eagle... He will spread His wings (*kanaf*) and He will take them, He will carry them on His wings (*ever*)” (Deut. 32:11). This verse uses two different words to mean “wing” – *kanaf* and *ever*. A third word in Biblical Hebrew for “wing” is *agaf*, and this word only appears in the Book of Yechezkel (12:14, 17:21, 38:6, 38:22, 39:4). Dr. Chaim Tawil compares the Hebrew *kanaf* to the Akkadian word *kappu*; the Hebrew *ever*, to *abru*; and the Hebrew *agaf*, to *aggapu*. But knowing that these Semitic parallels exist does not

quite help us understand the differences between the apparently synonymous Hebrew words. Therefore, in this essay we will delve deeper into the three Hebrew words for “wing” and some of their related forms and meanings.

The word *kanaf* refers primarily to the “wing” of flying animals, but it also became synonymous with “birds” themselves (e.g. Gen. 7:14). Rabbi Avraham Bedersi HaPenini (a 13th century Spanish sage) explains that because the wing is located at the edge of a bird’s body, *kanaf* also expanded to mean anything located on the “periphery” or “edge” of something (see Deut. 22:12, I Shmuel 24:5) or someplace (Isa. 11:12, 24:16, Yechezkel 7:2, Iyov 37:3, 38:13). Rabbi

Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) adds that the rays of light that emanate from the sun are also called *kanaf* (Malachi 3:20), because just as wings appear like tributaries that branch out from the bird's body, so do rays of light serve as offshoots of the Great Fireball in the Heavens.

Rabbi Wertheimer further notes that in its anatomical sense, the word *kanaf* denotes the outermost part of a bird's "wing" that protrudes the farthest away from the bird's body. It is precisely that bodily appendage that creates shade and serves as a metaphor for offering protection. Thus, "taking somebody under one's wings" in the idiomatic sense of offering them protection and support actually comes from the Biblical usage of the word *kanaf* (e.g., see Deut. 23:1, Ruth 2:12, 3:9).

To understand the core semantic meaning of *kanaf*, Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch (to Gen. 1:21, 7:14, Lev 19:11) invokes the interchangeability of KAF and GIMMEL, plus that of PEH and BET, to compare *kanaf* with *ganav* ("thief"). Rabbi Hirsch notes that both words involve "hiding" or "concealing," explaining that a bird's wing covers part of its body (and thus "hides" it), just as a thief steals from people in a clandestine, hidden way. Alternatively, a bird's "wing" allows the bird to soar so high in the sky that it "hides" from plain sight, just like the thief steals when nobody is looking.

In *Yerios Shlomo*, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) claims that the word *kanaf* derives from the biliteral root KAF-PEH, but he fails to offer a thematic connection between the two. In *Cheshek Shlomo*, Rabbi Pappenheim offers a detailed exposition on the biliteral root KAF-PEH ("receptacle") and the various words derived thereof (like *kaf*, "palm"), but neglects to mention that *kanaf* also comes from this root.

One of the other words derived from that root that Rabbi Pappenheim *does* discuss is *kapayim* ("Heavens"), which he explains refers to the sky draped over the horizon like a receptacle-shaped *kippah* ("dome"). In lieu of Rabbi Pappenheim explicitly explaining the connection between *kanaf* and the biliteral root KAF-PEH, we may surmise that the word *kanaf* refers to the bodily apparatus by which a bird can reach towards the *kapayim*.

Although we presented the word *ever* as though it means "wing," many prefer to translate *ever* as a "pinion" – that is, the entire outer part of a bird's wing, including its flight feathers. The earliest Hebrew grammarians, like Menachem Ibn Saruk (920-970), Rabbi Yonah Ibn Janach (990-1050), and the Radak (1160-1235), all trace *ever* to the trilateral root ALEPH-BET-REISH. These three grammarians also write that the Hebrew word *avir* ("strong") also derives from that root. On the surface, this would suggest that two entirely different meanings stem from this one root.

That said, Rabbi Avraham Bedersi HaPenini explains that the word *ever* is actually *related* to *avir*. He explains that *ever* actually denotes *any* "limb" on a living creature, like one's hands or legs. When it comes to birds, the word *ever* refers to their "wings" because that appendage musters the greatest amount of "strength" to function. Alternatively, Rabbi Hirsch (to Gen. 17:4) explains that *avir* refers to the "power" that can lift a person to a higher position (i.e. in a spiritual or moral sense), and thus it is on a par with a bird's *ever*, which similarly lifts a bird to a higher place (i.e. in a physical sense).

The Hebrew word *agaf* seems to be a cognate of the Biblical Aramaic *gapin* (Dan. 7:4 7:6), which means "wings." This suggests that the root of *agaf* is really bilateral, GIMMEL-PEH, and the ALEPH is not really essential to the root. As Rabbi Wertheimer explains it, *agaf/gaf* refers to the part of a bird's wing that is closest to the bird's body. In that sense, the *agaf* appears to branch off from the main part of the body, and so *agaf* came to mean "small city" or "suburb," which, in the proverbial sense, "branches off" from the main city (for example, see Yechezkel 38:6).

This point was made earlier by Menachem Ibn Saruk, who notes that just as *kanaf* means a bird's "wing" but can also mean the "periphery" of a given geographical place, so too does *gaf* in Proverbs 9:3 refer to the edges of a specific land. Menachem thus compares the trilateral KAF-NUN-PEH to the biliteral GIMMEL-PEH, explaining that they both carry the same two meanings. Perhaps we can suggest that these two roots are actually related etymologically by way of the interchangeability of KAF and GIMMEL, and the

often-disappearing NUN. (In Modern Hebrew, *agaf* refers to a “branch” or “department” of the central government.)

Rabbi Pappenheim argues that the letter ALEPH in both the words *ever* and *agaf* is not actually part of the root. This allows him to trace those two words to their biliteral core roots, BET-REISH and GIMMEL-PEH, respectively. He explains that the two-letter root BET-REISH primarily refers to “choosing” or “separating.” In that sense, the *ever* is the choicest of all limbs on a bird because it is the strongest. In Rabbinic Hebrew, the meaning of *ever* expanded to refer to any “limb.” Hence, the Rabbis speak of “248 *eivarim*” (*Maccot* 23b) and *eiver min hachai* (*Pesachim* 22b).

Rabbi Pappenheim further explains that the core meaning of the biliteral root GIMMEL-PEH is “outward protrusion” – which is, of course, an apt description of a “wing.” Other words that Rabbi Pappenheim understands as derived from this root include *gap/guf* (“body” which is a person’s outward projection, as opposed to the soul which remains inwards), *negef/mageifah* (“disease” which spreads outwards as it infects more and more people), and *gefen* (“cluster of grapes” whose fruits grow in a wing-like formation as though they spread out from the stem). Rabbi Pappenheim also suggests that *gap/guf* relates to *agaf* in the sense that one’s “body” is the means by which one can move about, just as a bird’s “wings” are the bird’s means of flying.

Although we have spelled the word *agaf* as though it were vowelized with an undotted PEH (i.e. FEH) as the ultimate letter, whenever variations of this word appear in the Bible, the PEH is always dotted (*agapav*, *agapecha*, *agapeha*, *gapin*). Radak claims that the word is vowelized as *agapim* instead of *agafim* because the dot in the letter PEH stands for a missing letter. He explains that *agap/gap* really derives from the Aramaic word *gadfin* (“wings”), so the dot inside the PEH appears in lieu of the letter DALET. (The Hebrew root GIMMEL-DALET-PEH means “to curse” or “blaspheme,” and it would be intriguing to consider how this relates to “wings” – see Rabbi Hirsch’s comments to *Yechezkel* 34:27, *Numbers* 15:30).

Actually, the Aramaic word *gadfa* has multiple meanings. For example, the Talmud (*Ketuvot* 105b) relates that a *gadfa* (“feather,” see also *Chullin* 22b) once fell on the rabbinic judge Amimar, and one of the litigants arguing his case before Amimar took it off of him. This act of kindness prompted Amimar to recuse himself from the case at hand, because he felt gratitude to that particular litigant. (The Biblical Hebrew word for “feather” is *notzah* – *Lev.* 1:16, *Yechezkel* 17:3, 17:7, and *Iyov* 39:13.) Elsewhere, however, *gadfa* means the bone of the wing (Rashi to *Yoma* 84a) or even the wing itself (see Rashbam to *Bava Batra* 73b). Interestingly, the Targumim translate the Hebrew words *misgeret* and *gvul* (“frame, border, perimeter”) as *gadnaf* (*Ex.* 25:25, *Yechezkel* 43:17, see also Rashi to *Succah* 20b), which also seems to be related to *gadfa*.)

- For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rklein@ohr.edu

OHR SOMAYACH ANNOUNCES A NEW BOOKLET
HARMONY OF A NATION
OVERCOMING BASELESS HATRED
BY RABBI CHAVIV DANESH
https://ohr.edu/Sinat_Chinam.pdf

Q & A

YITRO

Questions

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?
6. Why did Moshe tell Yitro all that G-d had done for the Jewish People?
7. According to the *Midrash* quoted by Rashi, how did Yitro respond when he was told about the destruction of Egypt?
8. Who is considered as if he enjoys the splendor of the *Shechina* ?
9. On what day did Moshe sit to judge the Jewish People?
10. Who is considered a co-partner in Creation?
11. "Moshe sat to judge the people, and the people stood before Moshe...." What bothered Yitro about this arrangement?
12. Why did Yitro return to his own land?
13. How did the encampment at Sinai differ from the other encampments?
14. To whom does the Torah refer when it uses the term "*Beit Yaakov*"?
15. How is G-d's protection of the Jewish People similar to an eagle's protection of its young?
16. What was G-d's original plan for *Matan Torah* ? What was the response of the Jewish People?
17. How many times greater is the "measure of reward" than the "measure of punishment"?
18. How is it derived that "Don't steal" refers to kidnapping?
19. In response to hearing the Torah given at Sinai, how far backwards did the Jewish people retreat in fear?
20. Why does the use of iron tools profane the altar?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

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 Egypt?" Moshe, hearing this, sent his wife and children back 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.
6. 18:8 - To draw Yitro closer to the Torah way of life.
7. 18:9 - He grieved.
8. 18:12 - One who dines with Torah scholars.
9. 18:13 - The day after Yom Kippur.
10. 18:13 - A judge who renders a correct decision.
11. 18:14 - Yitro felt that the people weren't being treated with the proper respect.
12. 18:27 - To convert the members of his family to Judaism.
13. 19:2 - The Jewish People were united.
14. 19:3 - The Jewish women.
15. 19:4 - An eagle carries its young on top of its wings to protect them from human arrows. So too, G-d's cloud of glory separated between the Egyptians and the Jewish camp in order to absorb Egyptian missiles and arrows fired at the Jewish People.
16. 19:9 - G-d offered to appear to Moshe and to give the Torah through him. The Jewish People responded that they wished to hear the Torah directly from G-d.
17. 20:6 - 500 times.
18. 20:13 - Since it is written immediately after "Don't murder" and "Don't commit adultery," it is derived that "Don't steal" refers to a crime carrying the same penalty as the first two, namely, the death penalty.
19. 20:15 - They backed away from the mountain twelve *mil* (one *mil* is 2000 cubits).
20. 20:22 - The altar was created to extend life; iron is sometimes used to make weapons which shorten life.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

A BLESSING ON YOUR HEAD (PART 3 OF 3)

“May Hashem bless you and guard you. May Hashem illuminate His Countenance upon you and be gracious to you. May Hashem turn His countenance to you and establish peace for you.” (Numbers 6:24-26)

The third and final verse that we recite is, “May Hashem turn His countenance to you and establish peace for you.” This last verse is the climax of everything that the blessing is conveying. And the very last word of the blessing encapsulates the entirety of what it is that G-d desires to bestow upon us.

But, at first glance, the need for the third verse seems to be redundant. We have already received a blessing for physicality, and we have already been the recipients of a similar blessing for spirituality – so, what is there left to be blessed for? After all, the physical and the spiritual are the two spheres that we exist within. There are no other realms. Therefore, what is the third verse granting us that we do not already have? The key to understanding the depth and the profound beauty of this blessing lies in the final word of the verse: *shalom*, peace.

The eminently brilliant eighteenth century Kabbalist, Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, in his seminal commentary on the Torah called *Ohr haChaim*, expounds on why the blessing concludes with peace. Peace is not just the absence of war. That is only one individual facet of a far greater concept. Rather, peace is the harmonious interaction between seemingly opposing dimensions, with each element complementing the other to create perfect symmetry. In the context of our blessing, the word peace represents the synthesis of the material blessing together with the spiritual blessing. Living a spiritually successful life here in this physical world requires an ability to live *within* the physical, and, at the same time, to *elevate* the physical. It requires turning the corporeal into a spiritual entity.

Essentially, being blessed with material accomplishments alone will not advance a person’s spiritual being. And, conversely, being blessed only

with spiritual achievements will not allow the person to truly experience the utter exhilaration of revealing the spiritual core that exists within every physical element. This is the *peace* at the conclusion of the blessing. It is a reference to the potential that exists within each and every one of us to blend together two disparate concepts in order to allow us to serve G-d fully. We eagerly await G-d’s blessings and we are certain that we will be able to utilize them to their fullest. But, without the added blessing of *shalom* we will never succeed in balancing the apparently unbalanceable opposites of spirituality and physicality.

In closing, it is fascinating to note that numbers are extremely significant in Judaism. Actually, each and every seemingly mundane detail has significance in Judaism! Nothing is by chance. Our blessing is comprised of three distinct but unified verses. As was mentioned in the introduction, the first verse is comprised of three words, the second verse has five words and the third verse has seven. The sum of three, five and seven is fifteen. Each letter in the Hebrew alphabet has a corresponding numerical value – a somewhat esoteric system known as *gematria*. Using *gematria*, the classic method of “spelling” the number fifteen is by combining the letter *yud* – which equals ten – and the letter *heh* – which corresponds to the number five. Together, *yud* and *heh* spell out one of the most dominant and significant Names of G-d. As we have learned together, within the fifteen words of these three verses are contained every single blessing that a person could possibly desire. And this concept is mirrored by the number of words which comprise the verses.

To teach us: All of the blessings in our lives come from just One Source – Hashem.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

Yitro

Thou Shall Not Covet

The last of the Ten Commandments demands that one not covet his neighbor's possessions. When the Decalogue is repeated in the book of Devarim, this commandment includes both the prohibition of coveting (*lo tachmod*) and of desiring (*lo titaveh*). The Midrash distinguishes between the two: *ta'avah* denotes inner desire or lust, and *chemdah* denotes also desire that leads to action. (It should be noted that although the Midrash defines the word *chemdah* in this verse to mean desire, in other contexts it is apparent that the word *chemdah* cannot mean desire. For example, the guarantee of security in property upon the three required festive pilgrimages to Jerusalem, "No one shall covet your land" (Shemot 3:24) cannot mean that no one will desire the land, but rather it means that no one will *exploit your absence*, and out of desire for your land will invade your borders.)

Thus, Jewish law prohibits *exploitation*. In the opinion of Maimonides, if one covets the possessions of his neighbor and pesters him by incessant importuning through friends or by other means until he gets the item from his neighbor even if he pays a high price for it – he transgresses this prohibition. (*Gezeilah v'Aveidah* 1:9)

This opinion is based on the Talmud's statement that it is a common fallacy to presume that the prohibition does not apply when one pays for the object. If one pressures his neighbor into selling him something that he covets – even though he legally obtains it – he nevertheless transgresses this prohibition.

The prohibition of covetous exploitation is further elucidated by the additional expression "*lo titaveh*" – do not *desire* anything belonging to your neighbor. The Torah prohibits each scenario, independent of the other: You should not think that the intention to legally acquire the object makes the desire permissible, and you should also not think that the transgression begins only with the deed. He who wishes not to come to sin must uproot the desire from his heart. The desire itself is a sin.

The purpose of these commandments is to declare all of one's fellow man's possession sacred unto him, and to forbid every kind of crime against them. But the final instruction – *You shall not desire* – bears the most emphasis. It means to guard against all forms of crime and exploitation, to not allow the desire for anything that is not yours to arise in your heart.

This final commandment bears the seal of G-d on the social part of the Decalogue. Even a mortal lawgiver can decree, "You shall not murder," but only G-d – who probes the thoughts and feelings of man – can decree "You shall not covet." Human governance can guard only against the crime, but so long as the seeds of the crime elude him, his governance remains sorely limited. As Hashem's people, we are commanded not only to control our words and deeds, but also to control our hearts and minds.

- Sources: *Commentary, Shemot 20:14*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hearing of the miracles G-d performed for the *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 himself, Yitro suggests that subsidiary judges be appointed to adjudicate smaller matters, leaving Moshe free to attend to larger issues. Moshe accepts his advice.

The *Bnei Yisrael* arrive at Mount Sinai, where G-d offers them the Torah. After they accept, G-d 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, G-d's voice emanates from the smoke-enshrouded mountain and He speaks to the Jewish People, giving them the Ten Commandments:

1. Believe in G-d.
2. Don't worship other "gods".
3. Don't use G-d's name in vain.
4. Observe Shabbat.
5. Honor your parents.
6. Don't murder.
7. Don't commit adultery.
8. Don't kidnap.
9. Don't testify falsely.
10. Don't covet.

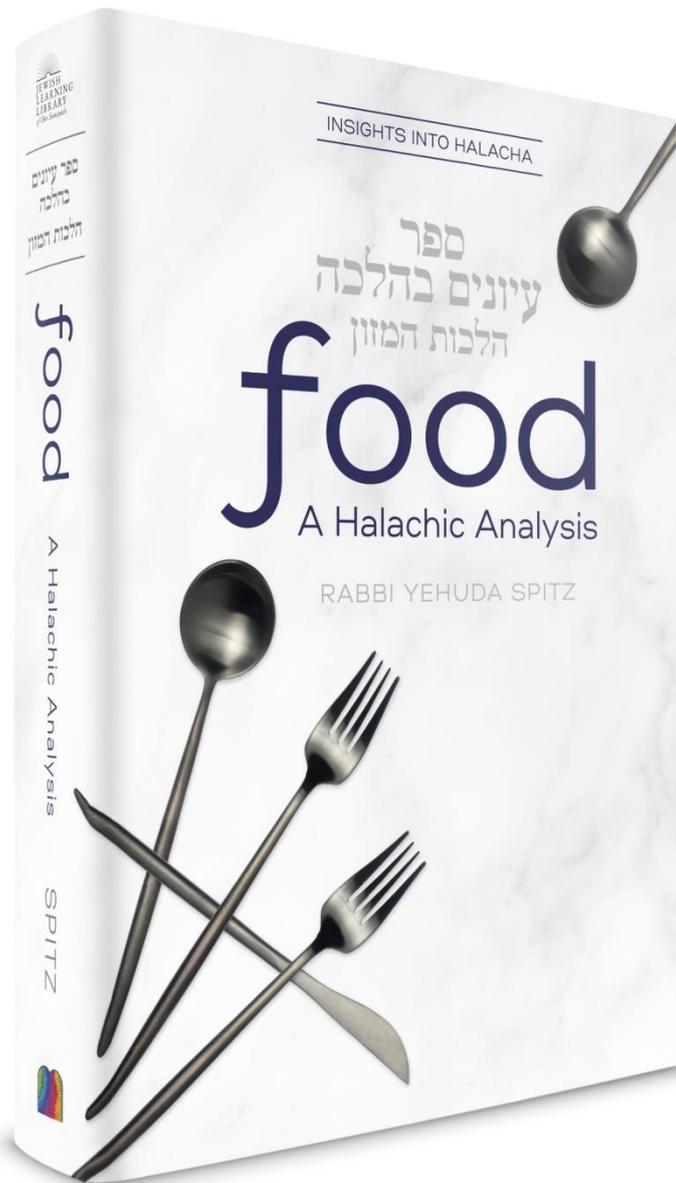
After receiving the first two commandments, the Jewish People, overwhelmed by this experience of the Divine, request that Moshe relay G-d's word to them. G-d instructs Moshe to caution the Jewish People regarding their responsibility to be faithful to the One who spoke to them.

**Ohr Somayach announces a new booklet
on
The Morning Blessings
by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer
www.ohr.edu/morning-blessings**

Just Published!

Rabbi Yehuda Spitz's new sefer -
Insights Into Halacha:
Sefer Iyunim B'Halacha - Hilchos Hamazon

Food: A Halachic Analysis



Coming Soon to Book Stores

**Currently Available From the Author:
Rabbi Spitz - yspitz@ohr.edu**

THE OHR SOMAYACH PODCAST

Follow the **story**.
Learn the **history**.
Make a **difference**.

SUBSCRIBE

