

THE CHABAD WEEKLY

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❖ PARSHAT YITRO

This week's Torah portion, Yisro, contains the narrative of the most definitive event in human history -- the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. In order to understand what happened at Mount Sinai, we need to examine the concept of Torah itself. As wisdom, the Torah is Divine, and therefore higher than any other body of knowledge on earth -- "For it is your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations." As a moral guide, the Torah is the epitome of all virtue, superior to any code of ethics that can ever be devised by man. All man-made ideologies and schools of philosophy contain an admixture of good and evil, truth and falsehood; in fact, any element of truth found in a particular ideology is merely a derivative of the eternal truth of Torah. Yet the greatness of Torah far supersedes our human and therefore limited perception.

The Torah is intimately connected to all of existence, as G-d created the world according to the "blueprints" contained in the Torah. Its minutest details directly affect all of creation, determining the amount and type of G-dly influence present in the world. Observing this fundamental relationship between Torah and reality, King David declared in Psalms, "Your statutes were music to me in my dwelling place." And yet, as explained in the Talmud, G-d was not pleased by these words of praise. King David was reprimanded for comparing the Divine wisdom of the Torah to something as mundane as song. The Torah is even greater than the mere fact that physical reality is dependent on it.

What then, is the essence of Torah? Chasidic teachings explain that Torah is simply the wisdom and will of G-d, united with Him in absolute unity. G-d and the Torah are one entity. The Holy One, Blessed Be He, has granted us the opportunity to grasp the Divine by allowing us to partake of His eternal wisdom. All other attributes and characteristics of Torah -- its unlimited enlightenment, its ethical superiority, its direct influence on existence -- are only secondary to this fact, the logical outgrowth of its essential nature.

As Torah is a part of an infinite, omnipotent G-d, it is only natural that its perfection extends to all these other areas as well. This eternal quality is most obviously manifested in the inner, esoteric part of the Torah, the teachings of Chasidut. Chasidut is not limited to one particular realm, but rather animates and illuminates all of Torah, which is why it is known as "the light of the Torah." The study of Chasidut therefore serves to prepare the world for the revelation of Moshiach and the Era of Redemption, when "the knowledge of G-d will cover the world like the waters of the ocean cover the sea bed." (From: L'Chaim #352,5755, Kuntres Inyana Shel Torat HaChasidut of the Rebbe)

"Remember the Shabbat-day to keep it holy." (20:8) Rashi explains this verse: Take heed to remember the Shabbat-day constantly, so that if you happen to find something special - set it aside for Shabbat. Likewise, our sages state that we are not to give special names to the weekdays but to refer to them in context of the Shabbat ("first day to the Shabbat, second day to the Shabbat," and so forth). Thus we remember, and are constantly conscious of, the Shabbat-day, and in effect preparing every day of the week for the upcoming Shabbat.

The same applies to the era of the Messianic redemption. It is referred to as "the Day that is entirely Shabbat and repose for life everlasting." Throughout the present "week-days" of the galut we must constantly remember and remain conscious of that "Shabbat-Day. We must now already prepare ourselves, and everyone and everything around us, for the upcoming Shabbat of the Messianic era. (From: Insights to Geula, Chabad in Cyberspace)

"And he said to Moshe, 'I, your father-in-law Yisro, am coming to you along with your wife.' " (18:6) QUESTION: He should have merely said "chotencha ba eilecha" -- "your father-in-law is coming to you"; the words "ani" -- I -- and "Yisro" are superfluous? ANSWER: According to the

Arizal, Yisro was originally Kayin and Moshe was Hevel. Tziporah, the wife of Moshe, was originally Hevel's twin sister and Kayin killed Hevel to obtain her for himself. The first letters of the words "Anui Chosencha Yisro" (I your father-in-law Yisro) are an acronym for "achi" -- "my brother." Yisro informed Moshe that he was the gilgul - reincarnation - of Kayin, and that since Moshe was the reincarnation of Hevel, they were brothers. To atone for the crime that he committed by killing him and taking away his twin sister, he was bringing him back Tziporah, who was the reincarnation of that sister.

"They administered justice on a regular basis, bringing the difficult cases to Moshe and judging the easy cases by themselves." (18:26)

QUESTION: Yisro advised Moshe to judge "kal hadavar hagadol" -- "every big case" -- and to let the judges consider "kal hadaver hakatan" -- "the small cases" (18:12). Why did Moshe speak of "hadavar hakasha" -- "difficult cases" -- and "hadavar hakat an" -- "easy cases" -- while Yisro spoke of big and small ones? ANSWER: In many countries the importance of a case is decided by how much money it involves. There is a small claims court for disputes over small amounts of money and a civil court which handles cases involving larger amounts. Yisro advised Moshe that he personally handle the "big cases" -- the ones involving large sums of money -- and the newly appointed judges should deal with the "small cases" -- the ones involving small amounts of money. According to Jewish law, a case involving a penny and a case concerning hundreds of dollars are both to be approached with the same seriousness (Sanhedrin 8a). Therefore, Moshe instructed that he would handle the difficult cases, regardless of the amount of money involved, and the easier cases would be under the jurisdiction of the judges. (From: Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky)

❖ CHOF BEIS SHEVAT

The yartzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (the wife of the Rebbe), is commemorated this week on the 22nd of Shevat (February 29 this year). In fact, the Rebbetzin's name teaches us not only about her holy life, but about our lives as well. On the Rebbetzin's first yartzeit, the Rebbe spoke about her name, as well as the significance to us of the date of her passing:

"Chaya" means "life." The Rebbetzin's life was filled with mitzvot and acts of goodness and kindness. But her deeds did not remain in the realm of the spirit and were not for a select few. Her deeds affected even the lowest points of this world as indicated by her second name, "Mushka" - a name in a foreign language. This indicates that the Rebbetzin brought holiness into the world, even into the lowliest parts of this world. The numerical equivalent of the Rebbetzin's name is 470, which is also the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word 'ait' - time. Time is limited, except when it becomes permeated with spirituality and G-dliness through the study of Torah, prayers, and acts of kindness and charity.

The 22nd of Shevat is the day of the Rebbetzin's passing. The number 22 alludes to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Jewish teachings state that G-d created the world using these letters. These 22 letters, in their myriad combinations, contain the essence of all bounty and good. The intent is to reveal in all matters of the universe the letters of the Torah which are inherent in the created world. From the Rebbetzin's name and from the date of her passing we can take one combined lesson for ourselves and our lives. We should fill our days with acts of goodness, kindness, and charity that are not merely surface or peripheral but that permeate and penetrate even the lowest parts of this world. With each individual working toward this end, we will soon see that G-dliness truly permeates this world with the revelation of Moshiach and the commencement of the long-awaited Redemption. (From: L'Chaim 5759)

THERE ARE TWO SORTS OF STATUTES: A) STATUTES THAT CREATE LIFE, AND B) STATUTES CREATED BY LIFE. HUMAN LAWS ARE CREATED BY LIFE SO THEY VARY FROM LAND TO LAND ACCORDING TO CIRCUMSTANCES. THE A-LMIGHTY'S TORAH IS A G-DLY LAW THAT CREATES LIFE. G-D'S TORAH IS THE TORAH OF TRUTH, THE SAME IN ALL PLACES, AT ALL TIMES. TORAH IS ETERNAL. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM SHEVAT 22)

The Deed is the exclusive property of the material world and the physical body.

-The Rebbe