

God orchestrated Revelation at Sinai as intelligent sounds emanating from flames. This removes all doubt that the Source of this Torah was Earthbound or biological, since all organisms die in fire.

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Weekly Parsha

Yitro

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“And Moshe's father in law, Yitro, the minister of Midyan, heard all that G-d had done for Moshe and for Yisrael, His people, that Hashem had taken Yisrael out of Egypt.” (Shemot 18:1)

Moshe and Bnai Yisrael are joined in

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Reward for Torah: Happier Without It

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: On page 525, Chapter 5, Volume Two, of “Duties of the Heart”; “Be not like servants who serve the master on condition of receiving a reward, but be like servants who serve the master not on receiving a reward. (Avos 1:3) How do we differentiate the above from a person who serves the Lord by coming to pray to petition for the Lord's help? Doesn't Hashem love those who fear Him, trust in Him, and ask for His help?

If the person receives the help he requested, can't this help be interpreted as reward?

Does this mean that when we pray to Hashem for help, we must always have in mind, and internalize our petition with the preface “I don't want a reward, I just want Your help?

Thank you for clearing up my confusion.

—Chaim

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(Yitro cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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the wilderness by Moshe's father-in-law, Yitro. Yitro brings with him Moshe's wife and their two children. However, Yitro did not embark on this journey only to reunite Moshe and his family. Yitro had received news of the events in Egypt and the redemption of Bnai Yisrael. According to our Sages, Yitro was so impressed by these events that he converted to Judaism.[1]

There is a substantial dispute among the commentaries regarding the timing of these events. Nachmanides observes that events in the Torah are not always presented in chronological order. However, we should assume that the events are narrated chronologically in instances in which there is no concrete evidence to the contrary. In this instance, there is no reason to assume that the events presented are not chronologically arranged. Therefore, Nachmanides asserts that Yitro came to the encampment of Bnai Yisrael immediately after the confrontation with Amalek.[2]

Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra disagrees with Nachmanides' position. He argues that there is significant evidence that Yitro came to Bnai Yisrael's encampment after the giving of the Torah. According to Ibn Ezra, the events related in our parasha are not presented chronologically. Our parasha first relates Yitro's arrival at the encampment and later describes the events of revelation. This order is opposite the order in which the events actually occurred.

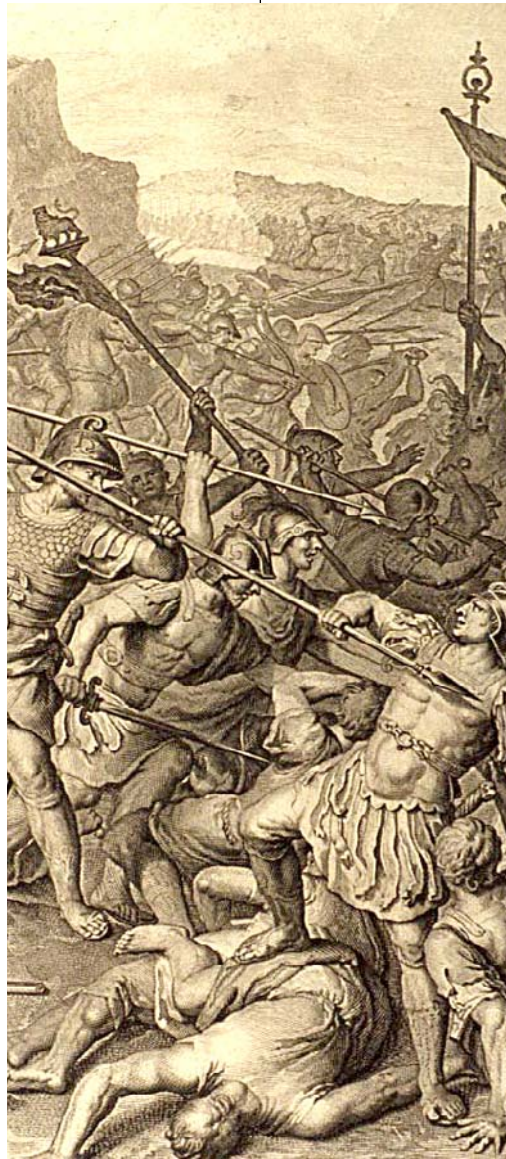
Of course, this raises an obvious question: Why does the Torah depart from a chronological presentation of events? Ibn Ezra suggests that the Torah abandons a chronological presentation in order to juxtapose Yitro's support of Bnai Yisrael with Amalek's hatred. In response to Amalek's aggression and hatred, we are obligated to destroy it. In contrast, we are obligated to recognize the support

of Yitro. We express this recognition by acting with kindness towards his descendants. Ibn Ezra observes that this lesson has a practical application: Yitro's descendants lived in proximity to Amalek. Bnai Yisrael is commanded to destroy Amalek. However, we must take care to not wage our war against Amalek in an indiscriminate manner. We must be careful to provide for the safety of Yitro's descendants even when battling Amalek.[3]

The roots of this dispute between Ibn Ezra and Nachmanides are found in the Talmud. The Talmud describes a dispute between three Sages on the meaning of our passage. Our passage tells us that Yitro heard of all that Hashem had done for Bnai Yisrael and of their redemption from Egypt. These Sages ask: What specifically did Yitro hear? What was the specific news, or report, that encouraged him to join the Jewish people? One Sage suggests that Yitro heard of the war with Amalek. The second opinion is that he heard of the giving of the Torah. The final opinion is that he heard of the splitting of the Reed Sea.[4]

Two of these positions are easily understood. The parting of the Reed Sea revealed Hashem's omnipotence. His omnipotence is evidence that He is the Creator. We can understand Yitro's decision – based on this awesome demonstration – that he must devote himself to the service of Hashem. We can also

appreciate the opinion that Yitro was inspired by the giving of the Torah. In the revelation, Hashem revealed Himself to Bnai Yisrael and gave to them the Torah. Hashem – the Creator – provided humanity with His guide to life. We can understand Yitro's decision as a response to revelation. However, it is difficult to understand the third opinion. According to this opinion, Yitro joined Bnai Yisrael in response to the war with Amalek. What aspect of this war motivated Yitro's decision? Bnai Yisrael's defeat of



(continued on next page)

(Yitro continued from page 2)

Weekly Parsha

Amalek was miraculous. However, this was not the greatest miracle that the nation had witnessed to that point. It certainly did not compare with the plagues in Egypt or the splitting of the sea. Why would this event motivate Yitro to join the Jewish people?

In order to answer this question, it is important to consider the context of this dispute. All three opinions are expressed in response to a single question: What news did Yitro hear and convert? In other words, what specific information of events motivated Yitro's decision to convert? We can assume that the Sages regarded Yitro as a righteous convert. Yitro made his decision based upon proper and laudable motives. If we accept this assumption, then we can rephrase the Talmud's initial question: What was Yitro's – the ideal convert – motive for conversion?

Again, two of the responses are easily understood. However, with our reformulation of the Talmud's question, we can understand these two responses more clearly. One Sage suggests that Yitro's conversion was a response to the splitting of the Reed Sea. This miracle revealed Hashem as the omnipotent Creator. Yitro recognized that he must abandon all other worship and devote himself to the service of the one true G-d. Another Sage suggests that Yitro's conversion was a response to the revelation at Sinai. We can easily understand this motivation. Hashem gave His people a way of life. Yitro recognized that Hashem's instructions for living provided the ideal model for human existence. He wished to adopt the Torah life. It remains difficult to immediately grasp the third opinion. Why was the war with Amalek a proper motivation for conversion?

However, now that we understand that these Sages are discussing proper motivations for conversion, we can understand this third position. But first, we must review key elements of Amalek's attack on Bnai Yisrael.

Why did Amalek attack Bnai Yisrael? Amalek was not threatened by Bnai Yisrael. Bnai Yisrael had not been given their land and would not attempt to conquer Amalek. Obviously, Amalek's attack was not motivated by practical, territorial considerations. What was Amalek's motivation? Apparently, Amalek was unable to tolerate the existence of Bnai Yisrael and the message communicated by their redemption from Egypt. In other words, Bnai Yisrael's experiences in Egypt demonstrated Hashem's providence, His omnipotence, and His special relationship with the Jewish people. Amalek's attack on Bnai Yisrael was an attempt to silence these messages.

Amalek's attack on Bnai Yisrael marked the emergence of a great divide. Bnai Yisrael was not just another nation among the family of nations. Instead, Bnai Yisrael and the messages that their existence communicated evoked antipathy, hatred and opposition. With Amalek's attack, two oppos-

ing forces emerged. Bnai Yisrael's existence and experiences communicate a new world-view and perspective. Amalek represents those nations that are opposed to this view and seek to destroy Bnai Yisrael and their message.

We can now understand the third opinion. Yitro was motivated to convert by the war of Amalek. Yitro recognized that the nations of the world were choosing sides. He did not feel he could remain a passive observer of this battle. He, too, had to choose between two opposing world-views and he chose to align himself with Bnai Yisrael. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 18:1.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 18:1.

[3] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Extended Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 18:1.

[4] Mesechdet Zevachim 116a.



Letters *from our* READERS



Facing Facts

Reader: Of course I realize the spiritual imperative of a yarmulke, but I have been led to believe that the injunction against cutting facial hair leads to the frum Jews wearing a beard and maintaining payis. This is not a custom, is it? This is required from the fully observant, is it not? My Lubavitch friends/teachers wear "the uniform" but my Rabbi at the modern orthodox shul of which I've been a member for about 40 years does not wear a beard, and in fact has no

observable payis. I am now more confused...I close with a warm Shabbat shalom and my thanks again for your previous kind and personal reply.

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: You are partially correct. Cutting facial hair is not a prohibition, as we learn that Moses' brother Aaron trimmed his beard. This is proper, and becoming, to present one's self in the most presentable manner. Furthermore, it is stated that a Talmid Chacham is punished if he bears a stain on his garment. Certainly he is punished if he appears disheveled. By doing so, others maintain a poor image of Torah which he represents. "The righteous ones are judged to a hair's breadth". This means that God holds those of greater knowledge and perfection to a greater degree of performance. Talmud Sabbath also teaches that in line with one's knowledge, are his punishments: the more one knows about Sabbath, the greater is his responsibility. The same reasoning applies to the righteous.

Regarding your halachik questions...payis is a law: one should not cut his hair like the heathens, who used to shave off their payis with bowl-shaped haircuts. Christian and Buddhist monks have been depicted with this style...a good reason to avoid duplication. However, no prohibition exists to cut one's facial hair as I mentioned. The prohibition is to cut one's face in five spots as a mournful act, performed by heathens. Therefore, we do not use a razor blade on our face above the jaw line, lest we accidentally duplicate those heathen cuts. However, there is no reason not to use an electric shaver since the blades do not come in contact with the face.

Reader: Todah for the speedy reply. Most informative, and very pleasing for my "taste." I now understand this issue with a clarity not provided before in my 65 years. Yasher Koach and my best wishes for a healthy, joyful and serene Shabbat. ■



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Reward for Torah

(continued from page 1)

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: The obvious truth that serving God out of love must include our requests from Him in Tefilah (prayer) demands that we first distinguish God's "reward" from our "requests".

Antignos, the author of this quote, says, "Do not serve God as a servant seeking reward, but as a servant who does not seek reward...and let the fear of heaven be upon you". The "reward" discussed here is in reference to Torah fulfillment. Antignos intends on alerting man to his proper relationship with God: he should serve God (follow Torah) out of a love, and for no other motive. In contrast, our "requests" refer to those personal matters that are not mitzvot, commands. So "reward" refers to the reward of mitzvot, whereas "requests" refer to personal matters. We now understand that while we do not seek reward for Torah fulfillment, this does not contradict the other realm of life where we must seek personal assistance from God on our path to perfection.

A Rabbi once said, "A true servant of God, is a servant to one's self". This means that Judaism targets the best life for man. We are not sacrificing, or doing anything "for" God with all our most mitzvot. He does not need man. With Torah, we are doing something for ourselves.

Antignos wishes to correct a fault in our thinking. Many people – perhaps due to faulty education – seek something in return for all activities they would prefer not to do. However, no reward is needed when an adult is asked to enjoy a barbecued steak, or a child is asked to swim in the ocean...no inducement is required. If someone seeks reward for Torah observance, Antignos alerts this person to a fundamental error in his relationship with God. He views the Torah lifestyle as inconvenient, or even painful and useless. This explains why he concludes, "...and let the fear of heaven be upon you". Antignos is teaching a primary lesson...

Which one of us would argue with a doctor who tells us, that in order to live, we must take 12 pills daily: not 11, and not 13? Realizing the decade or so of schooling it takes to be a doctor, based on the intricacies of the human body, we accept his prescription, and follow it to a tee. He knows better. Well...that is Antignos final lesson: "let the fear of heaven be upon you."

This means to say, "realize that God commanded this on you". Accept your ignorance concerning why you should observe, and recognize that this Torah is a plan of the infinitely wise Creator. With such an attitude, we will treasure God's laws, and not serve Him for some imagined good. If you follow a doctor, you should certainly follow God who knows more. Eventually, our ignorant Torah performance based simply on God's authority, must eventually be replaced with a clear understanding of each law's perfection. Then we will arrive at fulfilling His law based on a love of the good we now realize.

Torah study is the greatest mitzvah, for a few reasons. First, but not primarily, without study, any mitzvah is simply a rote act, with no expression by us that we agree with its underlying "idea". We are simply moving our bodies, but don't know why. But study is not so much a good thing because it "qualifies" a mitzvah as a meaningful act, as much as it is to comprehend God's greatness.

Studying for itself or "lishmah", outweighs all other mitzvot. Why is this?

When we study, and realize profound truths; we are enlightened by those ideas. Our soul is transformed once again to a greater appreciation of God's wisdom. Our highest element – our Tzelem Elohim (soul) – is now benefiting. Mitzvot, then, are simply a barometer of our convictions. So when I finally understand why Shabbos is so vital as a "demonstration to the nations that a Creator exists, created, and rested", I now fulfill Shabbos differently: as an expression of my commitment to enlightening other humans to God's existence, and His role as Creator". The underlying truth I have realized through Talmudic study is the greatest mitzvah, since here, my soul is more attached to God, the source of all reality. But I must also follow through in this new conviction, with action: mitzvah.

Someone functioning on this level does not do so out of any other motive. He does so because he wishes to live in line with truth. He does not wish to lie to himself, or avoid what on the surface seems like a restrictive lifestyle. Taking 12 pills daily also "restricts" our activity...but towards a greater good of an enduring, physical life. The Torah offers even more: eternal, spiritual life in the pleasure of God's wisdom.

If while reading this, you don't identify with the phrase "enjoyment of study", then you have just benefited greatly! You now realize that you have not uncovered the one experience God desires for you, and which, can offer you delight on a daily basis, with little energy, and a remark-

able amount of tranquility and excitement.

But reaching this enjoyment will take a little time, and an adjustment of your emotional makeup.

When you first commence serious Torah study with Talmudic scholar, you will feel pain. But, you must recognize this pain as "missing your usual pleasures" and not the "pain of study". Study is not painful. This is always the first hurdle. Many people feel frustrated when they start to spend time studying, because their energies that normally flow to other activities, are currently finding no outlet. This is only "perceived" as pain, and typically associated as "pain of study". This is why kids hate school: they are frustrated by not being on the basketball court, and identify the frustrating action of Torah, as "painful".

To enjoy wisdom, we must become immersed in study, break loose of those emotional attachments, until we too finally enjoy study for its own sake...not for any reward. Our old attachments will be released, now replaced with our full attention to study.

If we are serving God with the hopes of reward, then we are not enjoying what He intends: Torah study as the end goal. The way to correct this problem is to first "have the fear of heaven upon us" – to recognize that God does in fact know better; He desired the good for us, and we must accept this at first out of a fear of His infinite wisdom. Eventually, we will come to study from a love of the involvement.

This very Mishna in Avos itself should serve as a sampling of the ideas of Torah. In one statement Antignos relates the problem, and the solution. The problem: man seeks something "for" serving God. Meaning, he does not yet understand the joy of wisdom. The solution: "let the fear of God be upon you." Accepting Torah study based on God's authority, regardless of the initial pain, will eventuate in an unparalleled enjoyment. For when we are not engaging our souls, as we work, lounge, travel and engage in other activities...the central part of our being is "on hold". We are spiritually dead. We cannot possibly be happy when our central element is uninvolved.

To conclude, seeking reward for study is akin to seeking reward for winning the lottery. Once we reach the level where study is enjoyable, and we all can reach it, then no reward is sought. And even when we arrive at that life, our requests in prayer are not a contradiction, since we are seeking only that which can facilitate this new Torah lifestyle, and God will certainly grant you that which is in line with His will. ■

Weekly Parsha

What is the singular message?

God wished to benefit mankind by creating an unparalleled proof of Divine revelation and religious instruction. But a physical manifestation, that God is not physical? How is this accomplished? It seems impossible.

God wishes not to lead any human astray. Life is physical, but God is not. Therefore, God's instruction must take on some tangible form so that man perceives it. Herein lies the risk.

To express that He is unknowable, God told Moses, "Go down and warn the nation, lest they break forth to God to see, and a multitude will be killed." (Exod. 19:21) Human nature teaches us that all is viewable. We heretically assume this in connection with God as well. However, God is not created, and not physical. He therefore is imperceptible to our senses. And if a person expressed a desire to see God, he would be killed, as were those 57,000 Jews who looked into the Ark upon its return from the Philistines. The Jews sinned again and created the Golden Calf, for this very fault: "the man Moses is gone". They said the "man" Moses. Of course he is a man! But this verse comes to teach us: it expresses their attachment to a leader who is physical, i.e., a "man". Humans seek tangibility. But this psychological and infantile need can and must be matured, and abandoned.

At Sinai too, God knew very well that the Jews would yearn for tangibility in His revelation. To avert this catastrophe where the nation might project physical characteristics onto God, He included a number of features in Revelation at Sinai. Foremost was the command to rail-off the mountain. This controls man's physical attempt to "approach" God. God also created a sound of a shofar that was "exceedingly" great. Why shofar, and why exceedingly?

A Rabbi once taught that man cannot describe God's true greatness. On the one hand, we require expression; on the other, we are ignorant of God's nature. For this reason, we follow the praises of only the wisest men like Moses and King David. But we learn that King David concluded his Psalms with no words, only with musical sounds. A musical sound bereft of words is King David's precise lesson: we have no words! A brilliant observation and insight by this Rabbi. Man must not be deluded that he possesses any truth about God's nature "For man cannot know Me while alive" was stated by God to Moses. How much more so in regards to us?

For this reason, we can answer why God included the shofar. He wished to express this

idea of an indescribable event now occurring. The fact that the shofar waxed "exceedingly" means "without description". When we cannot describe a phenomenon, we say it was "so" whatever. Here too, the shofar was incomprehensibly loud. The mountain too "quaked exceedingly". God wished that our two major senses of vision and hearing were overwhelmed. This overwhelming sensation will contribute to our admission that we cannot fathom God, who is performing this event. So the rail prevented physical attempts to see God, while the shofar and quaking addressed man's thoughts. Both of man's components were addressed: his physical and his mental.

Forty years later when entering Israel, Moses reminds the Jews, "You saw no form at Sinai, only a sound." (Deut. 4:12) Moses reiterates this important lesson: man cannot know God. Maimonides too stresses the essential nature of this lesson by incorporating this concept into his 13 Principles: "God is not a body, and has no strength in the body, and has no shape or image or relationship to a body or parts thereof."

With an appreciation of the vitality of this lesson, how can we apply this today?

We must denounce the concept that "we have a piece of God in us". "Parts" of God suggests physicality, which God is not. God punished such believers with death. The reason being, that if our concept of God is flawed, our lives have no meaning, and death follows. This thinking is heresy.

We must also not place notes in the Western Wall, since God is no "closer" to us there...as this week's Parsha concludes: "In every place I cause my name to me mentioned (the many Temple locations) I will come to you and bless you." God is not limited to any given location, but recognizes our prayers from any place. Placing notes into the Western Wall assumes physicality as well.

We must not assume God has needs, is lonely, or possesses any other human quality, as all these suggest physical or psychological characteristics – inapplicable to God.

If we choose to, we can simply parrot the nonsense so pervasive in our communities that spans the foolish, to the heretical, and suffer the same fate of the Gold Calf worshippers, and the Jews who sought to "see" God in the Ark. But if we follow God's prescription, engaging in patient Torah study, and remain true to what He wrote, we will remove all false ideas, and enjoy the consistent and reasonable nature of all God's Torah lessons. ■

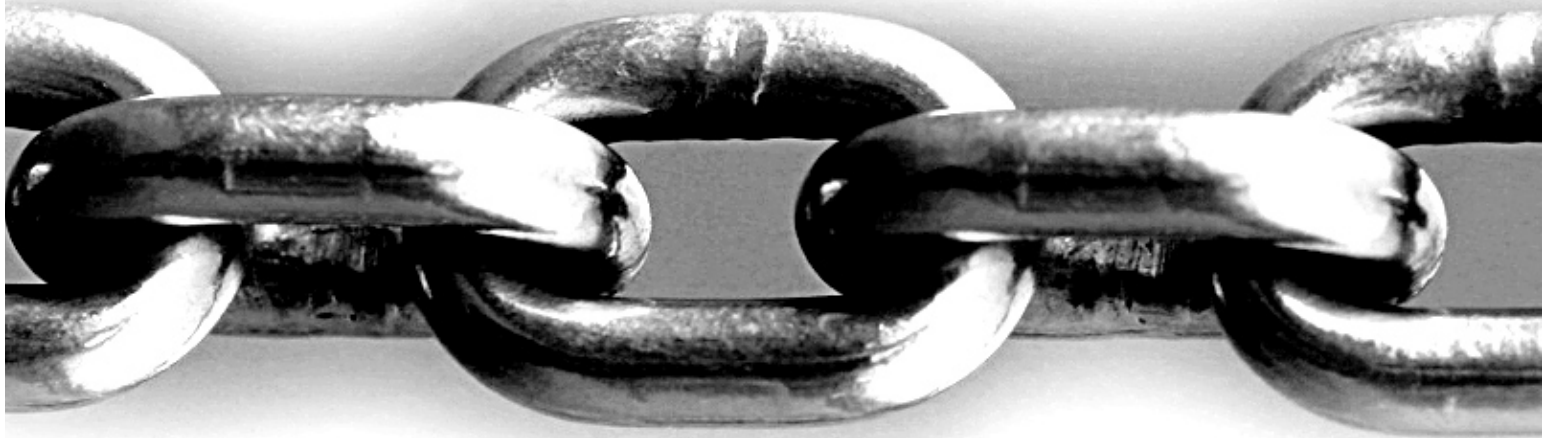
(Parsha continues next page)



Don't ascend
Sinai.
The shofar waxed
exceedingly.
The mountain quaked
exceedingly.

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

I am God your Healer: Part II



Last week's Parshas Beshalach recounted Mara's undrinkable, bitter water. The Jews are taught that if they follow the Torah, they will avoid all the diseases inflicted upon Egypt, "For I am God your Healer" God says.

In one verse, (Exod. 15:25) God sweetens the water, together with commanding the Jews in three mitzvos: honoring parents, setting up courts, and the Sabbath. The connection in one verse of God making the waters drinkable, and these three laws, teaches an inextricable bond between them: life is worthless without Torah, but primarily, without the lesson of these three laws.

I would like to briefly address an idea that may tie all three commands together, and explain why these commands were needed at this point.

The Torah teaches three beings that we are not to curse: parents, princes (leaders), and God. These three beings are all authority figures. Our parents commence our lesson of authority, followed by other leaders and then God. This is God's design, that we must acclimate the acceptance of authority from youth, if we are to successfully transpose this rudimentary model onto God and accept all He outlines in Torah. By accepting God, we will enjoy the best life. Cursing any of these beings displays the inability to live by God's standards.

When the Jews left Egypt and the shores of the Red Sea, they were finally rid of their oppressors, who were also their authority

figures. God wished to imbue the Jews with the new authority: Himself. He taught the Jews these three laws of honoring parents, courts, and Sabbath for this reason. The first two are obvious, and with little thought, we understand how Sabbath imbues man with God's authoritative, Creator role. These lessons were needed at this juncture since the Jews' authority figures had been stripped of them, and there was a "risk". The Jews' freedom was not for freedom's sake, but to accept God's Torah on Mt. Sinai and serve Him. But their temporal freedom before arriving at Sinai freedom ran the risk of tasting so good; those freed slaves may reject new authority. These three laws addressed the Jews' precarious state at this precise juncture in the nation's development.

We once mentioned that God hurried the Jews out of Egypt, to the point that their loaves didn't rise. Matza is what became of their loaves. God underlines this with much significance in the Torah. What is so essential about loaves which didn't rise, and which became matza due to a hurried ousting, that an entire holiday is built around them?

The Jews were fed matza, even before their hurried oust. This is the "poor man's bread" we refer to at the Seder. History teaches that Egyptians were the creators of bread. They most certainly ate it. So the Jews saw their oppressors enjoying this soft food, while they broke their teeth on matza throughout their bondage. The the enslaved Jew, bread assumed the identity as "free man's food". I once suggested that this is

why the Jews were baking bread that night they left Egypt, as they were finally free and planned on enjoying the literal "taste" of freedom. They wanted to portray the image of freedom, so they were preparing bread for themselves. And they shared such a universal desire for bread, that the Torah says that when ousted by the Egyptians during the Death of Firstborns, the Jews carried their "loaf", and not their "loaves". (Exod. 12:34) The Torah emphasizes this significance that loaf, by repeating in verse 39, "They baked the loaf". It appears that the Torah wishes to speak of the loaves in a collective, as if all loaves shared something in common. I suggested that the loaves were significant to the Jews. It represented their freedom.

What was God's response to this loaf? He rushed them out so the loaves would not rise and become bread. God retarded the process of their loaves, so they could not express their identity with Egyptians who enjoyed unbridled freedom. That is not the freedom God had in mind. Due to these considerations, God also quickly taught the Jews the lessons of authority. These lessons would also serve as a sampling of the Torah they were about to receive. The retarded loaf and the lessons at Mara served to inculcate into Jewish consciousness that freedom per se is not God's plan: they must accept God's authority. Two sides of one coin.

The lesson taught at Mara's bitter waters: life is truly bitter without accepting the authority of God, and the incomparable sweetness of His laws. ■

Parenting



TEEN TRAGEDY

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Please do not read this article
on Shabbos, as it is to be a day
without heartache.

Last week we email you concerning two teenage girls who were reported missing. Unfortunately, we have learned that the police have posted an update on the missing persons: both girls R"N were found dead, the scene suggested suicides. We must not allow these two teens to pass in vain. There is a vital lesson all parents must learn and apply, immediately, before it is too late...again.

We don't know the worries of these two precious girls, or whether they could be reached. Our hearts go out to their parents, families and friends. But it is evident that Rachel Crites, Rachel Smith, and too many other teens see no hope for happiness. Teenagers go through the toughest times in life. There is great pressure to conform to peers to gain their respect, and to be part of a group. It is all about self-worth. Parental pressures, in the form of control issues compound matters, and parents' foolish vicarious wishes aggravate matters...followed by teens' obligations in the home, sibling rivalries, and jealousies. A teen's need for self-esteem and popularity, combined with parents who don't offer any, is a lethal mixture.

Are parents eliciting their children's deepest concerns? Are they sensitive enough to read their children's faces...their moods, behaviors, and warning signs? Do they sit their child down – even against their will – swallow their roles as superiors, and play the needed role of “helper”? If not, parents must initiate conversations, or find someone with whom their teens will open to, and even pay them to take on a support and mentoring role.

Teens don't have any answers, just questions, and deep concerns. We must make ourselves available to them, in an easy, and a clearly genuine demeanor. They must have someone safe in their daily lives

to turn to when life gets rough...and we see how rough it gets. For if they have no one to turn to, they turn on themselves. Many times teens are forced to either give up, or teach those who oppress them a hurtful, terminal “lesson”...the last lesson they teach anyone.

We don't hold positions without much schooling. Similarly, we don't know what is best for “our” children, simply because they have our last names. We aren't fit parents, simply because we bore these children. To help prevent similar tragedies, all parents must be educated on basics in child and teen psychology. Shuls, yeshivas, and community leaders must organize mandatory adult sessions where experienced professionals teach the “rules of engagement”, education of teens, emotional issues, and cite specific cases and solutions. And schools must incorporate a mandatory class where students may voice social and familial issues. In such a forum, those teens with problems will feel comfort in the knowledge that others also share similar fears and worries. These teens will feel less ashamed, and will vocalize issues so they may be learned by adults, and addressed, instead of swelling to the point of implosion. And those students that don't have the concerns yet, will be educated on what they are, and how to properly handle them, as they inevitably arise.

Although adults must work tirelessly as the breadwinners, children must take priority over business and social agendas. Money can always be earned, and we can always socialize at the next affair. But we cannot postpone a child's development...it will happen with, or without us.

Our children's secure and happy development will happen with us.

And without us, there may be no development at all. ■

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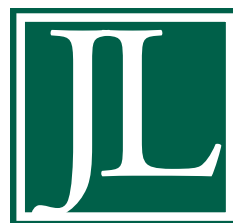
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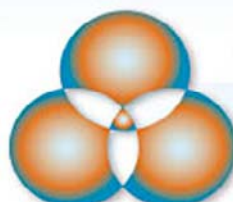
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