

Shabbat Times

	Ⓜ	Ⓝ	Ⓜ	Ⓝ
London	17:04	18:08	Cambridge	16:59 18:11
Manchester	17:08	18:16	Leeds	17:02 18:11
Birmingham	17:06	18:14	Liverpool	17:08 18:22
Oxford	17:05	18:17	Jerusalem	16:51 18:03

SHABBAT



LASHEM שבת לה'

פרשת יתרו

PARASHAT YITRO

תנועת בני עקיבא
BNEI AKIVA UK

The most widely distributed weekly Torah periodical written by our youth in the United Kingdom.

Looking at the Future

Talia Album

Parashat Yitro is infamous for the appearance of the Ten Commandments. Whilst the majority of the commandments are prima facie theologically tenable, the same cannot be said for the third. God proclaims, "You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heaven above, or on the earth below... You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the Lord your God am an impassioned God, Who visits the iniquity of the parents upon the children upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments." (Shemot 20:4-6) But why should seemingly innocent children and grandchildren suffer for the wrongdoings of previous generations?

The Ibn Ezra responds to this concern with an interpretation of the word 'poked' (visits). He argues that this word denotes. 'memory and remembrance.' God 'remembers the sins of the ancestors' unto later generations, but refrains from punishing them, hoping that the sinner and/or his descendants will do teshuvah (repent). Thus, Ibn Ezra makes use of this specific wording to limit God's activity to remembering as opposed to punishing. Ramban rejects this understanding. He acknowledges that 'poked' alone generally signifies remembrance, but insists that when followed by the preposition al as in our verse, poked can only mean vengeance or punishment. God will indeed punish later generations. Still, Ramban too finds a way out of the problem, citing the context of the verse. He limits this punishment to the transgression of idolatry and turning to other gods. No other sin will evoke future retribution.

Some seven hundred years after Maimonides, M.D. Cassuto (1883-1951) offered his explanation of God's threat. First, Cassuto explains that the verse cannot be viewed vis-a-vis personal experiences. Rather, these words are "directed to the entire nation as a single entity in time throughout its generations." That is to say, in reading of God's threatened punishment, one must view this as directed to the collective nation - for if a whole generation strays, its descendants will be held accountable. Moreover, Cassuto points out that "since a man... grieves over the tribulation of his children and grandchildren not less... than over his own affliction, the Bible issues a warning so as to keep man far from sin" (Cassuto, Commentary on Exodus, 243). Ideally, we should be more concerned with our own iniquities and trespasses than those of future generations. However, we may pay more attention to the message if we know it may affect our children and children's children.

Still, the wording of this third utterance does have a purpose. It alerts us to the especially insidious sin of idol worship and it shocks us into realizing the implications of our actions. Not as punishment but as fact, how we behave today sets a pattern and likely precedent for our descendants tomorrow.

Talia Album is in Shevet Lehava and was Sganit on Haroeh-Gimmel machane 5777

Coming up...

-Limmud continues at the London Bayit Monday night at 7:30

- Next week is the Finchley and Bushey Ha'irgun. Contact Zechariah on Svivot@bauk.org for more details

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Shabbat Debate

Every week we will be writing weekly debates to discuss over Shabbat. The debates will then be continued on facebook, after Shabbat.

Would Yitro have been a better leader than Moshe?

BNEI AKIVA
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FEBRUARY	4	WOODSIDE PARK	
PINNER	4	BARNEY	
WHITEFIELD	4	18	MIL HILL
GOLDERS GREEN	4	25	HENDON
CHIGWELL	11	25	SALFORD
BOREHAMWOOD	18	31	MINI MACHANE

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Understanding the Basics

Jewish life involves many fine details. Hashem – the timeless reality Who is the context of every reality and Who brings us all into being – exists in the micro as much as the macro. The myriad folios of the Talmud, and countless volumes of *halachic* literature are filled with discussions about how we should or shouldn't behave in just about every situation conceivable. The message is clear: How we act matters. Our behaviour impacts the world in a profound manner. God cares about us and the way we behave.

But are we sometimes too caught up in the details? It has been my experience that all-too often Jewish practice and education is short-sighted; it fails to see the principals upon which the details rest. Since we are such a pragmatic faith, and since the details of our behaviour matter so much, we can fail to pay attention to the abstract concepts that our faith is built upon. We lose the forest in all the trees.

In our *parasha*, we read about Am Yisrael receiving the Torah. This impressive experience is described with fascinating imagery (Shemot 20:14):

“And all the people perceived the sounds ...”

The question is blatant: Normally we see sights and hear sounds, what is meant by “perceived the sounds”? When we hear a sound, the closer we are to the sound the clearer it will be. We must be very precise and specific with regards to sound in order for it to be deciphered. “Two voices are not heard together”, the Talmud teaches (therefore, for example, one cannot fulfil their obligation when two Shofars are blasted at the same time). Sound is specific. Sound is about the details.

On the other hand, sight opens our eyes to the collective – literally. Sight is the sense that perceives the context of the details, and how those details fit-in to the general. When looking at a painting from close, all you see are a bunch of lines; but we you take a step back you can see how those multi-coloured lines mesh together to make a beautiful picture. We can see the bigger picture, not hear it.

When standing at Sinai, Am Yisrael heard Hashem's voice giving the Torah. They saw the sounds. They didn't see the sights – a homogenised, low-resolution image of fluffy, abstract ideas. Nor did they hear the sounds – a collection of discombobulated details with no conceivable connection or purpose. Matan Torah – the receiving of the Torah – was when we were able to see how all the details collectively are part of a holistic system; we didn't only receive the commandments, but we saw their rational and ultimate end-goal.

Whilst Jewish life involve myriad details, the performance of *mitzvot* is not meant to be void of meaning – performed out of rout like a body without a soul. This is true not only regarding the *performance* of *mitzvot*, but the teaching of Torah in general: If educators fail to present a glimpse into the rationale, purpose, and meaning of Jewish life – if we don't teach the abstract and esoteric in additional to the practical – students will fail to connect. In our generation of great ideals, if we do not present the all-encompassing messages of Judaism, and how the details fit-in to them, we run the risk of failed Jewish education. Rav Kook, who was a pioneering educator who faced the fierce atheism of his time, writes (Orot pg. 124):

“The general failure of the spiritual disciplines to focus on studies pertaining to Hashem has dimmed the conception of Hashem; there is no rational service of Hashem sustained by refined feelings.”

We have the tendency to speak of details and just assume we understand the principals. We speak about “Judaism” without getting to the essence of it. No matter how eloquently we can describe the details of the *mitzvot*, and how masterfully we can correlate Torah to the various disciplines of modern thought, we mustn't neglect the principals that all these details are based upon. This ultimately leads to the disenchantment from Torah.

Rav Kook further writes (Orot HaTorah 3:3):

“The collective of the Torah should be bonded with the heart which such ... clear recognition that from the power of this generality will flow the power of caution and diligence regarding all the details of the mitzvot and the intricacies of the Torah. Then this will be similar to the power of life which flows from the heart and spreads out to all the organs in the body.”

At Sinai we saw the sounds. We perceived how the details flowed-forth from general, all-encompassing principals. We understood the rationale, meaning and purpose as much as the practicality. The details flowed from collective, like life flows from the heart.

The Week that Was...

Last week was the Chigwell Ha'irgun, thank you for all those involved involved making it such a great success. Shabbat shalom to all those at the Borehamwood and Elstree Ha'irgun!!



Sviva Spotlight- Finchley

Dvar Torah and Update from one of our Svivot

Finchley BA have been having a fantastic year so far with each week providing new and exciting activities from our brilliant madrichim. The whole Sviva is buzzing right now for the Shabbat

וְשָׁפְטוּ אֶת הָעָם כְּכֹל עֵת אֶת הַדָּבָר הַקָּשֶׁה וְבִיאוּן אֶל מֹשֶׁה וְכָל הַדָּבָר הַקָּטָן יִשְׁפְטוּ הֵם

When Yitro comes to Moshe and tells him ‘לא טוב הדיבר אנשר אתה עשה’, he advises that Moshe judge ‘כל הדיבר הגדול’ – ‘every big case’ and the judges would consider ‘כל הדיבר הקטן’ – ‘every small case’. Why then does the Torah say that Moshe judged ‘הדיבר הקשה’-‘the difficult cases’ and to parallel this ‘הדיבר הקטן’- the small cases were judged by those whom he appointed? Furthermore, Moshe was a man of great wisdom; was he not able to come to this conclusion by himself?

In many societies, the importance of a matter of litigation is dictated by amount of money involved; a small claims court for minor monetary disputes and a civil court for cases of greater amounts. Yitro was advising Moshe that he should handle the big cases regarding large sums of money personally and the appointed judges could deal with the smaller ones.

However, halachically, cases involving pennies and those concerning hundreds of pounds are to be approached and adjudicated with the same level of seriousness (Sanhedrin 8a). Therefore, Moshe instructed that he would handle the difficult cases, regardless of their monetary worth and easier cases could fall under the jurisdiction of the judges.

Moshe had not already instituted this system because a judge is only qualified to rule on a matter if they have no vested interest in the outcome. Seeing as the disputes were regarding the wealth taken from the Egyptians, something all Jews took part in bar Moshe, he believed that he was the only person who could rightfully adjudicate these matters.

Bracha Lawrence is in Shevet Morasha and is a madricha for Finchley BA