



# Sha'arei Eliyahu

## Table Talk

## פרשת יתרו

### Torah לשמה & Unity

The Pasuk says: “**וַיִּתְחַשְׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגֵד הַהָר**” – *Israel encamped there in front of the mountain.* The Gemara in Shabbat 88b says that later on in the parasha the Pasuk reads “**וַיִּתְחַבְּבוּ בְּתַחְתֵּית הַהָר**” – *They stood under the mountain*” the Gemara continues and explains that ה' picked up the mountain over their head and said: “*If you accept the Torah, excellent, and if not, there [where you stand] will be your burial.*” Why is ה' “forcing” the nation to accept the Torah?

Some explain that ה'’s intentions were as follows: If your acceptance and learning of the Torah is not לשמה (for the sake Heaven), but instead in order to bring disparity and hatred amongst the nation, then this Torah will be as an elixir of death. As our Sages taught us in Taanit 7a: “**כָּל הַעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה לְשֵׁמָה תוֹרָתוֹ**” – *Anyone who engages in Torah for its own sake, his Torah study will be an elixir of life for him, And anyone who engages in Torah not for its own sake, his Torah will be an elixir of death for him.* It comes out that if one doesn't learn לשמה then it's as if Hashem puts the mountain over one's head. If one learns Torah just for its text then it becomes the opposite of the elixir of life.

### SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Mincha	5:10 PM
Candle Lighting	5:14 PM
<b>Shiur Shabbat</b>	<b>8:30 PM</b>
Shacharit	8:30 AM
Shabbat Derasha	3:45 PM
Mincha	4:45 PM
<b>SUNSET</b>	<b>5:34 PM</b>
<b>Aravit (Shabbat Ends)</b>	<b>6:16 PM</b>
Rabbenu Tam	6:47 PM

### SHORT & SWEET

יתרו – וַיִּשְׁמָע יִתְרוֹ – *“And יתרו heard”* what exactly did יתרו hear? The Hida says that משה was a כהן and before he went down to Egypt to save the Jewish Nation he gave a גט (divorce) to צפורה, therefore he couldn't remarry her – *a cannot remarry someone he divorces.* However once יתרו heard that ה' took away the כהונה from משה now he can remarry צפורה, so יתרו returned her to משה saying take her back to yourself as a wife. This is why the verse continues and says: וַיִּקַּח יִתְרוֹ חֵתְנוּ מִשֵּׁה אֶת־צִפּוֹרָה אֵשֶׁת מִשֵּׁה אֶתֶר שְׁלוּחֶיָהּ – *יתרו, the father-in-law of משה, took משה's wife, after she had been sent home.*”

~ R' Yosef Akilov

1. Why was the Torah given to us on שבת?
2. How many of the 613 Mitzvot can we still perform nowadays?
3. What was the color of the Luchot (Tablets)?
4. Which two Tzaddikim were buried beside Har Sinai?

Therefore from the beginning the Pasuk says **וַיִּתְחַשְׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגֵד הַהָר** (singular tense) as Rashi says on the Pasuk “*כאיש אחד בלב אחד*” – *as one man and with one mind*, as this is the way to getting the Torah לשמה. Not by causing people to be divided [as this is a great איסור (prohibition)] but by having unity. Because as we said earlier learning Torah not לשמה is like the elixir of death.

And regarding that which the Gemara Pesachim 50b says: “**לְעוֹלָם יֵעֹסֵק אָדָם בְּתוֹרָה אִפִּי' שְׁלֵא לְשֵׁמָה שְׂמִתוֹךְ שְׁלֵא לְשֵׁמָה**” – *really a person should learn Torah even if it's not לשמה because from learning not לשמה it will come to לשמה*, Tosafot answers this in Gemara Berachot 17a by telling us that in Pesachim the Gemara is telling us that a person who begins to learn for כבוד (honor) will come to learning לשמה. However when one learns in order to cause arguments and separation between people the Gemara (*Berachot 17a*) says it is better if this person wasn't born. This is the point of the Torah telling us that they were **encamped** by the mountain [as one], to receive the Torah with proper intention.

In addition that which it says in Berachot 5a: “**לְעוֹלָם יִרְגֵּז אָדָם יֵצֵר טוֹב עַל יֵצֵר רָע**” – *One should always incite his good inclination against his evil inclination [i.e., that one must constantly struggle so that his evil inclination does not lead him to transgression]. אם נצחו מוטב ואם לאו יעסוק בתורה*” – *If one [succeeds and] subdues [his evil inclination], excellent, but if [he does] not [succeed in subduing it, he should] study Torah.*” Also what it says in Kiddushin 30b: “**בְּרַאמִי יֵצֵר הָרַע וּבְרַאמִי לֹא תוֹרָה תְּבַלֵּינִי**” – *I created an evil inclination, which is the wound, and I created Torah as its antidote.*” Lastly in Succa 52b it states: “**אִם פָּגַע בְּךָ מְגוּוֹל זֶה מִשְׁכְּהוֹ לְבַיִת הַמְדַרְשׁ אִם אָבֵן הוּא**” – *If this scoundrel, [the evil inclination,] confronted you, [seeking to tempt you to sin,] drag it to the study hall. If it is [like] a stone, it will be dissolved by the Torah. If it is [like] iron, it will be shattered...*”

Meaning to say that with the power of Torah and the Bet Midrash, which brings unity (as is stated in Kiddushin 30b “**אֵת וְהָב בְּסוּפָה**” – *at the end there will be love*” [between ה'חברותא {learning partners} for pushing one another to the depths of Torah]), one can overcome his יצר הרע. This was the intention of וַיִּתְחַשְׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל... they were encamped with unity in order to receive the Torah as one. What does the last part of the Pasuk (בְּגֵד הַהָר) come to teach? As it says in Succa 52b the יצר הרע is called a mountain [ **לְבַא מִבְּיָאוּ הַקְּב"ה** ] – *At the end of days, God will bring the evil inclination and slaughter it... For the righteous the evil inclination appears to them as a high mountain.*]

This explains the Midrash that we started with [Shabbat 88a]. ה' raised up the יצר הרע over their head and said that if you accept the Torah you can beat your יצר הרע but if you don't accept the it then the יצר הרע will swallow you and you will be buried by him. When a person gets swallowed by his יצר הרע he cannot realize the power of Torah, unity and the power that he has to be able to connect to Hashem. He is blinded by the desire of want which is the result of the יצר הרע swallowing him. This sheds light on what it says in Shabbat 31a. “**דַּעֲלֹךְ סָנִי לְחֶבְרֵךְ לֹא תַעֲבִיד זֶה הוּא כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָה**” – *That which is hateful to you do not do to another; that is the entire Torah*”. When you don't hurt others and have unity [for this is the entire Torah] only then will come the power of beating the יצר הרע.

~ R' Yosef Akilov



1. יתר is very holy; therefore, it was the best day to deliver the holy Torah to the holy Bnei Israel. It also hints that workingmen should set aside much more time to learn Torah on שבת than they are able to do during the week! (Ben Ish Hai, Yerushalmi Shabbat 15, Pesikta Rabbat 23) 2. Of the 613 Mitzvot, 270 of them are still possible to perform today (approx. 42%)! All the other Mitzvot will be performed when Mashiah comes when the Bnei Israel will return to do the service of the Beit Hamikdash. (Chofetz Chaim, Rav Saaya Gaon on Shir Hashirim 5:2) 3. The Luchot were sapphire. (7's) Throne and the sky are also blue, so that we should be reminded of Matan Torah. (Or Hachaim Devartim 11) 4. Rav Saadya Gaon & Rav Hai Gaon are buried right next to Har Sinai. (Seder Hadorot 2448)

**A Torah Scholar Who is Not G-d-Fearing**

VS

**A G-d-Fearing Individual Who is Not a Torah Scholar**

All of the laws of honoring Torah scholars apply only to Torah scholars whose fear of Heaven precedes their wisdom; however, a Torah scholar who is not so G-d-fearing and whose Torah knowledge is only an external show should not be afforded any honor befitting genuine Torah scholars. There is likewise no obligation to honor someone who teaches Torah publically but is not a Torah scholar himself. Although one should treat such an individual respectfully since he brings merit to the public by teaching Torah, he is nevertheless not on the same platform as actual Torah scholars whom the Torah commands us to respect and revere.

If one gives lectures in public or counsels others and presents himself to be a Torah scholar although in reality he is not or if one uses one's connections or authority to have himself appointed as a rabbi or a *Dayan* (rabbinical judge) when in fact he is not worthy of such positions and certainly if one takes advantage of people who regularly listen to him lecturing and leads them on to believe that he is a great scholar, there is no obligation to honor such a person at all. Our Sages (Sanhedrin 7b) expound the verse "You shall not make with me gods of silver or gold" to refer to one who is appointed as a *Dayan* as a result of his wealth, political influence, and the like. Not only is it forbidden to stand before any *Dayan* who has been appointed as a result of his wealth when he is not a real Torah scholar, it is even a Mitzvah to degrade and mock him. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Bikurim, Chapter 3, Halacha 3) states that Rabbi Manna would mock the honor of those who were appointed as a result of their wealth. Rabbi Yoshiya added that the Tallit (rabbinical garb) on such a "rabbi" is considered like a donkey's saddle. Rabbi Ashyan said that one should not stand before who is appointed because of his wealth and one should not call him "rabbi". Additionally, his rabbinical garb is considered a donkey's saddle. All of this is quoted by Maran Ha'Bet Yosef (Choshen Mishpat, Chapter 8).

Clearly, one should not rush to any conclusions and begin treating the honor of people lightly. Only when the leading Torah scholars of the generation point out a certain individual and it becomes clear to them beyond a shadow of a doubt that this individual is not a Torah scholar and is accepting authority upon himself undeservingly, the law regarding such an individual has been explained above.

It has happened not long ago in Israel where people mistakenly believed that a certain individual was a Torah scholar and as a result, people followed this individual and he caused many people to transgress some of the gravest prohibitions in the Torah and all of this was because people could not discern between genuine Torah scholars and individuals who are not Torah scholars and merely show their wisdom by delivering simple lectures. The gauge regarding this issue is whether or not the Torah scholar in question is accepted by other genuine Torah scholars, especially the luminaries of the generation. Similarly, the character traits of this individual should be inspected to ascertain that he is of fine and upstanding character and that he is not only worried for his own honor. Only if the individual's fear of Heaven precedes his wisdom should people seek Torah from him, as our Sages (Mo'ed Katan 17b) teach us, "If the rabbi resembles a Heavenly angel, one should seek Torah from his mouth; otherwise, one should not seek Torah from him." The Tur quotes all of this in Yoreh De'ah, Chapter 246.

When Maran Rabbeinu Ovadia Yosef *zt"l* was younger, he would be bothered by the fact that people would call anyone who would deliver lectures "Chacham" or "rabbi", for this title is reserved for individuals who are real Torah scholars. Regarding those who are not genuine Torah scholars, one may call the "Reb" but not any other exaggerated titles which may cause other pitfalls in the future.

**Is it correct that all the festivals besides for Purim will be discontinued? Isn't the Torah eternal and unchanging?**

It is written in the Talmud Yerushalmi that all of the books of the prophets and the scriptures will be discontinued in the future and only the five books of the Torah will remain in addition to Megillat Esther which will also remain, as the verse in the Torah states, "A great and endless voice", and in the Megillah it is written, "And their commemoration shall not cease from their offspring". The Midrash Mishlei says that all the festivals will be discontinued in the future besides for Purim which will never be discontinued. The Rambam writes at the end of Hilchot Megillah that all of the books of the prophets etc. shall be discontinued in the days of the Mashiach besides Megillat Esther which will exist forever like the five books of the Torah and the laws of the Oral Torah. Although all the memories of suffering and pain will disappear in the future, the days of Purim (which came about through suffering) shall not, as the verse states, "And these days of Purim shall not elapse from among the Jewish nation and their commemoration shall not cease from their offspring."

The Ra'avad disagrees with the Rambam and writes that this does not mean that the books of the prophets will be discontinued for they are also part of the Torah and there cannot be a book that is left unlearned, rather what the Midrash means to say is that even if the enactment to read from the various Megillot and books of the prophets in public will be abolished, nevertheless, the obligation to read Megillat Esther in public shall never be abolished. Some have actually explained that it is possible to understand the words of the Rambam in this way as well, that even if all of the establishments to read the books of the prophets and scriptures in public will be eliminated, the obligation of reading Megillat Esther in public will exist forever. The Rashba writes in a response (Chapter 93) that the meaning of this Midrash is that although the other festivals may, G-d forbid, be completely forgotten from the Jewish nation as a result of their sins for there is no guarantee that the Jewish nation will observe the festivals together, nevertheless, regarding Purim there is a special promise from Hashem that it will never be completely forgotten from the Jewish nation in any given generation. When the verse says that the days of Purim "shall not elapse from the Jewish nation and their commemoration shall not cease from their offspring", this refers to the special promise that the Jewish nation will celebrate the holiday of Purim forever.