

חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

by Dr. Joseph Geliebter

Topics Covered

Parashas Beshalach

I

- ▶ *Yisro heard from afar a general account of the miracles and came to hear the details of the miracles*
- ▶ *Divine Justice: Hashem repaid the Egyptians for not providing straw, by trapping them in mud during the splitting of the sea*
- ▶ *"Vayichad" ("And Yisro rejoiced"): This includes both body and emotion*
- ▶ *Wonderous allusions in "Vayichad"*
- ▶ *On Shabbos, we receive two crowns, while during the week, the tefillin illuminate our hearts and faces.*
- ▶ *A beautiful explanation is given for saying "vayinafash" ("He rested") right at the beginning of Shabbos*
- ▶ *One who knows he has something precious*

Parashas Yisro

I

In our holy Torah, in this week's parasha (Shemos 18:1), it says: **וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוֹ כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ כִּי־הוֹצִיא ה' אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם.** "Yisro, the priest of Midian, the father-in-law of Moshe, heard about everything that G-d had done for Moshe and for His people Israel, that the L-rd had brought Israel out of Egypt."

Rashi s.v. "And Yisro heard," explains: "What report did he hear that made him come? The splitting of the sea and the war with Amalek."

And in verse 9, it says: **וַיִּחַד יִתְרוֹ עַל כָּל־הַטּוֹבָה וַיִּשְׂרַחֲמֵהָ אֶל־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הֹצִילוֹ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם:** "Yisro rejoiced over all the good that Hashem had done for Yisroel, that He had delivered them from the hand of the Egyptians. And Yisro said: 'Blessed is the L-rd, who has delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of Pharaoh, who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the L-rd is greater than all the gods, for in the very matter in which they conspired against them....'"

Yisro initially heard only a general account of the miracles from afar, but then he heard the details from Moshe.

When I discussed this parasha with the holy Admur of Boston-Lawrence, the gaon, Rav Yaakov Horowitz shlita, he spoke with a fiery holy passion

Topics Covered

slipping away from him will desire it even more

- ▶ *Hashem returns the crowns to us by the law of returning an item given as a security deposit*
- ▶ *Sleeping on Shabbos is a delight, but how can we sleep without the security deposit*
- ▶ *When one remembers this, they long for Shabbos all week*
- ▶ *Novel Allusions in "Ve'eleh Shemos" ("These are the Names")*

II

- ▶ *Beyond its spirituality, the event at Sinai was a multi-sensory experience*
- ▶ *"They saw the voices": one could see the words*
- ▶ *The sense of smell was also involved; as the Sages said, with each word spoken, the world was filled with a fragrant scent*

about the matter of Yisro hearing only the generalities from afar but then hearing the details from Moshe—i.e., how Hashem repaid the Egyptians “measure for measure” for every evil they inflicted upon Klal Yisroel.

I was deeply moved by the depth of feeling of the abovementioned holy rabbi, and this caused me to be inspired with the following novel insight:

One of Pharaoh's decrees was that the Jewish people had to produce the same quota of bricks without being supplied the straw, as it says in the Torah (Shemos 5:10-21). As we know, clay without straw remains mud, and the Jewish people, after a full day of grueling labor, had to gather straw and make bricks without reducing their required output.

Hashem repaid the Egyptians in kind: They had given the Jewish people mud and demanded they harden it into bricks with their own straw and on their own time. At the

Splitting of the Sea, therefore, the Egyptians had to travel through deep mud, while the Jewish people walked on “dry land in the midst of the sea”—i.e., on a firm and smooth path.

The Egyptians having to go through mud in the sea was retribution for their not providing the Jewish people with straw to mold bricks.

It occurred to me that this is not merely a part of Az Yashir but its very pinnacle:

"For Pharaoh's horse came with his chariot and horsemen into the sea, but the Jewish people walked on dry land in the midst of the sea." As Ibn Ezra explains, this was a miracle within a miracle—at the very same time that the Jewish people walked on dry land, the Egyptians were stuck in mud.

(Regarding our earlier discussion as to whether "The L-rd shall reign forever and ever" is the conclusion of Az Yashir—when we were dwelling on this subject in Parashas Beshalach, it occurred to me to reconcile the opinions

based on what I found in *Pesikta Zutarti*— that the eighteen verses of Az Yashir correspond to the eighteen blessings of Shemoneh Esrei. It seems plausible that this applies to the time when the Beis Hamikdosh stood, and there was truly a "sanctuary, O L-rd, [that] Your hands have established." But in the time of exile, which our sins have brought upon us, just as we needed an additional blessing—the blessing against the heretics—as a counterbalance to our persecution by the Gentiles, so too we must add, "For the horse of Pharaoh, etc." to serve as an aid until the fulfillment of "Deliverers shall ascend Mount Zion to judge the mountain of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the L-rd's," may this occur speedily in our days.)

In the Pesach Haggadah, in the Dayenu song, we say: "If He had brought us out of Egypt and not split the sea for us, *dayenu*—meaning "*dai lanu*," it would have been "*sufficient for us!*" And in our prayers, we say: "Give thanks to the L-rd, for He is good, for His kindness endures forever." I have no doubt that the phrase "For Pharaoh's horse came with his chariot" is a part of the

Pesukei Dezimrah and represents the final miracle at the pinnacle of the Az Yashir praises, to maximally express our appreciation and love for **Hashem**, so that we can fully accept the yoke of Heaven's kingship with love in the recitation of the Shema.

"Vayichad" – body and emotion

וַיִּחַד יִשְׂרָאֵל "*Vayichad Yisro*," "**And Yisro rejoiced.**" Rashi explains: "Yisro rejoiced—this is the plain meaning. But a *Midrash Aggadah* says: "His flesh became *חֲדוּדִין חֲדוּדִין*, "prickly" (goosebumps), as he felt **distressed** over the destruction of Egypt. This is the source of the saying, 'A convert should not insult a gentile in his presence for up to ten generations (*Sanhedrin* 94a)."

At first glance, the plain meaning and the *Midrash* seem contradictory: Was Yisro **joyful** over the Jewish people's redemption and all the miracles that Hashem performed for them, or was he **distressed** over the destruction of Egypt? Additionally, does "Vayichad" refer to a **sense of joy** on the part of Yisro or to his body reacting with **goosebumps**?

It seems to me that not only is there no contradiction between the simple explanation and the *Midrash*, but they actually **complement each other**. Regarding whether "**Vayichad**" refers to Yisro's joy or to his body reacting with goosebumps, there is no question at all, for when emotions are deeply stirred, the body reacts from the intensity of it—whether it is an emotion of love and joy or, G-d forbid, an emotion related to distress, as we see clearly. Therefore, there is no contradiction here: "*Vayichad*" refers simultaneously to both the emotion and **the physical reaction resulting from the intensity of the emotion**.

After this insight occurred to me, I discovered that my interpretation aligns with the words of the **Holy Ohr Hachaim**, who says as follows:

"Vayichad Yisro"—Onkelos translates this as "rejoiced," but we need to understand why the verse uses an Aramaic term here instead of the more straightforward Hebrew expression. And although the Sages said (*Tanchuma Yisro* 11) that the Torah was given in seventy languages, nevertheless, something is implied by the change in wording. It seems

the verse is telling us that from the intensity of the joy, his flesh became prickly. For when someone experiences an extraordinary joy, beyond the usual measure, he feels a sensation in his physical composition, sometimes even to the point of fainting or real danger. Refer to what I explained on the verse, "...saying, Yosef is still alive" (Bereishis 45:26). Yisro, although he had prior knowledge of the good news, when he heard the full details of the miracle – especially how the angel pursued the Egyptians, as I explained (above, on verse 8, on the words, "Moshe recounted"), and how Hashem saved them, his flesh prickled. This is a physical response experienced by all living, feeling, beings."

"And he rejoiced" – A combination of conflicting emotions

Regarding the contradiction in emotions – whether Yisro was joyful about the Jewish people's salvation or distressed about Egypt's destruction – this poses no difficulty at all. On the contrary, this is how it should be! **He should rejoice over the Jewish people's salvation while also lamenting Egypt's destruction,** as Hashem said to the

ministering angels when they wanted to sing at the splitting of the Sea: "The works of My hands are drowning in the sea, and you wish to sing?!" This aligns with what we wrote earlier – that Yisro, who came from outside into the Jewish nation, was able to recognize and be awed by the miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish people even more than the Jewish people themselves. **Similarly, because he came from the nations of the world, he could be more sensitive to Egypt's destruction and feel the true pain of "The works of My hands are drowning in the sea."**

"Vayichad" allusions

Let us preface the explanation for this based on what we recite on the holy Shabbos: "And the Bnei Yisroel shall observe the Shabbos ...and on the seventh day He ceased and 'rested' (*vayinafash*)". The commentators posed a question based on the Talmudic interpretation (*Taanis* 27b) of the word "vayinafash," as an acronym for ווי [אבדה] נפש, "Alas, the soul is lost!" – referring to Motzei Shabbos, when the extra soul we possess on Shabbos departs. Why, ask the commentators, do we

mention at the beginning of Shabbos something that pertains to its end – the lament of "Alas, the soul is lost"?

In answer to this question, the Bostoner Rebbe of Lawrence, shlita, explained to me (in the conversation with him I mentioned earlier) that human nature is such that when a person knows they currently possess something that they will, in time, no longer possess, their desire for it intensifies, because they know that their possession of it is temporary. Knowing that the present moment is the only opportunity to enjoy it heightens their yearning. Similarly, at the beginning of Shabbos, to enhance a person's love and longing for Shabbos, we already mention the lament of "Alas, the soul is lost," which relates Shabbos's conclusion, thus intensifying our desire for Shabbos.

It later occurred to me that all of this is hinted at in the very word "Vayichad" itself. It is an Aramaic word, as noted earlier, and can be divided into two parts in Aramaic: "Vay" – meaning "Alas!" – and "chad" – from the root "chadi," meaning

"rejoiced." Yisro was both distressed over Egypt's destruction and joyful over the Jewish people's salvation, as previously explained.

**"Vayichad" –
repentance out of fear**

Alternatively, "Vayichad" can be interpreted as follows: "Vay" – "Alas!" as explained earlier, and "chad" – "one," referring to the **"Unique/Exclusive One of the world,"** blessed be He.

Yisro was astounded by all the goodness and miracles he saw that Hashem had performed for the children of Israel, and he felt **"woe!" – regret and sorrow – for his previous life**, during which he had worshipped every form of idolatry that existed in his time. Through his newfound revelations, he came to believe that Hashem is one, unique, and unparalleled in Heaven and earth, and there is none beside Him. He thus accepted upon himself the yoke of Hashem's oneness (see Rambam, *Sefer Hamitzvos*, Positive Commandment 3), just as we do when reciting **"Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad"**

("Hear O Israel, Hashem is our L-rd, Hashem is One").

In truth, this is a profound mystery that has puzzled great sages – namely, why the *"dalet"* in "Vayichad" is emphasized (*dagesh*). In the words of Ibn Ezra:

I do not know of any other instance in the entire Scripture where a letter is emphasized at the end of a word..." (see there). I would humbly suggest that this may hint at the enlarged dalet in "Echad" ("One"), which symbolizes our complete acceptance of Hashem's unity in the Heavens above and on the earth below and in all four directions of the world. We thus have "vay," signifying a cry of pain and regret for the past, for having served all forms of idolatry in the world, and yet through this, Yisro drew closer and accepted the yoke of the kingship of "chad" – the Unique One of the world. Indeed, this is the level of repentance out of fear."

(And the discerning reader will understand that there is no contradiction between interpreting "chad" as "joy" or as "One," referring to Hashem's uniqueness, for surely, "the nearness of Hashem is my good" and "rejoice in Hashem" – i.e., even one

who repents out of fear will ultimately rejoice in Hashem, which is the concept of "tremble with joy. Reflect on this.)

Explanation of the Sfas Emes regarding how Tefillin draws down an Illumination in the face and heart:

The Sfas Emes writes (Yisro 5647/1887) as follows:

We are commanded every day to remember the Giving of the Torah, as it says, "and you shall make known... the day you stood before Hashem, your G-d, at Chorev" etc., for the Torah transcends time. Therefore, there is always renewal here, just as at the time of the receiving of the Torah, etc. Similarly, when Hashem uttered, "I am Hashem, your L-rd," G-dliness rested upon the souls of the Jewish people. After the sin, they fell from that level, but through the mitzvos that Hashem gave us, we have the power to draw illumination down into our souls. It is taught that on Shabbos, Moshe Rabbeinu gives the Jewish people the two crowns of "we will do" and "we will hear," and it can be said that these are the two illuminations mentioned above: the illumination of the face and the purity of the heart. Through the mitzvah of tefillin, even on weekdays,

these illuminations are drawn down, albeit temporarily."

crowns and the additional soul?

Hashem returns the crowns to us under the law of "You shall surely return the collateral to Him":

This way, one will cherish shabbos more throughout the week:

I propose the following novel idea: On Shabbos, the reason we do not need tefillin is that Shabbos itself is a sign, as we say in "Veshamru": "אֹתָהּ הָיָא לְעוֹלָם" ("it is a sign forever"). This is stated in the verses near the incident of the Golden Calf (in Parashas Ki Sisa, Shemos 31:16-17). It is possible that the message is that on Shabbos, when we have the two crowns of "we will do" and "we will hear" returned to us, we do not need to be concerned about the sin of the Golden Calf.

This is the meaning of "and on the seventh day, He ceased and rested"—that on Shabbos itself, we have the crowns, and we do not have to worry about the sin of the Golden Calf. But the whole time there gnaws at us the thought of "Alas, the soul is lost" regarding Motzei Shabbos, when we lose the two crowns. This makes one cherish Shabbos more throughout the day, knowing that right now he has the two crowns and these illuminations.

Shabbos itself is a sign, and therefore Hashem, as it were, is obligated to return the crowns to us under the law of "you shall surely return the collateral to him as the sun sets" (Devarim 24:13). If we owe a debt of repentance and atonement due to the sin of the Golden Calf, and Hashem took the crowns as collateral, He is obligated to return them to us on the holy Shabbos as a "night garment." For how can we attain "sleeping on Shabbos is a delight" without the

On Shabbos, I was studying a book by the Maharal Tzintz and fell asleep. When I awoke, I thought of another way to encode the first two words of Sefer Shemos, "V'eleh shemos." Let us treat these two words as a single unit. We'll skip the letters *vav* and *tav* of the word "shemos" for now, which leaves us with the letters *shin* and *mem*. If we reverse their order, we get *mem-shin* (מש). Adding the letter *heh* from the word "V'eleh," and we get "Moshe" (משה).

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A hint for the Jewish people in the letters of the Torah about their healing, which will come through the appearance of Moshe Rabbeinu.

Let's go back to the beginning. In Parashas Shemos, we explained that the first letter, *vav*, serves as a connection to Sefer Bereishis, so we'll skip over the *vav*. We are left with the two letters *aleph* and *lamad*, which can be read as "El Moshe" ("to Moshe")—the most common expression of communication between Hashem and Moshe Rabbeinu. Hashem speaks to Moshe, and through Moshe, He speaks to the entire Jewish People.

What is the significance of this code? After all, Moshe hasn't even been born yet?! But that's precisely the point! Even at this early stage, in the first two words, "V'eleh shemos," it is hinted that Moshe will

be the redeemer. **The cure precedes the affliction.** Moshe is already here—'El Moshe.'

The verse, "These are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt" can thus be read as follows: [ויאל משה ות[וררת]. That is, "V [the connection to Sefer Bereishis] *el Moshe v't[oraso]*" ("**And to Moshe and his Torah the children of Israel who came to Egypt**").

As we explained, the initial *vav* is the *vav* of connection that links "V'eleh shemos" to Sefer Bereishis. The Giving of the Torah in this parashah is the foundation of Bereishis—it is what guards Bereishis from descending into chaos. This is the secret of existence through "the sixth day." How do we sustain the world? Through Moshe having received the Torah for all of Israel. **Where and when? On the sixth of Sivan, in this very book, Shemos, in our parashah.** And all of this is already alluded to at the beginning of Sefer Shemos—that this book will support Sefer Bereishis through the connection of "el Moshe," which reaches its peak in this parashah.

The letter *vav* hints at the day the Torah was given:

Moshe is the one, the messenger. The Torah will be given to Moshe in Sefer Shemos, and through him, we will receive it. The Tablets are given "**el Moshe**," ("**to Moshe**") on the sixth (*vav*) of Sivan as an emissary on behalf of the Jewish people. Moshe is on the level of an angel—he can ascend to Heaven without food, drink, or sleep. Just as an angel has one mission, so too does Moshe have one mission: to transmit the Torah to the Jewish people. It is no coincidence that Moshe is the humblest of men. Because Moshe has no ego at all, there is nothing to obstruct the transmission of the Torah. One hundred percent of what Moshe receives is passed on to all of the Jewish people.

I learned this concept from the Maharal Tzintz in his novel insights on Parashas Beshalach. The verse, "and they believed in Hashem and in Moshe, His servant" indicates that faith in Hashem comes through faith in Moshe as the intermediary. Through belief in "Moshe, His servant," we arrive at belief in Hashem.

The letter *vav* is the connection to the world's existence:

The letter *vav* is not just a connective letter; it is a supporting pillar that prevents Bereishis from descending into chaos (*tohu vavohu*), Heaven forbid. It is the only letter that looks like a strong and stable pillar, supporting Bereishis and ensuring it does not, Heaven forbid, collapse into chaos.



II

At the Giving of the Torah, there were multi-sensory experiences:

In the Torah, in our parashah, chapter 20, verse 15, it states: וְכָל-הָעָם רָאוּ אֶת- וְקוֹל-הַשָּׁפָר וְאֶת-הַהַר עֹשֵׂן וַיֵּרָא הָעָם וַיִּזְעְזְעוּ וַיַּעֲמְדוּ מֵרֶחֶק "And all the people saw the thunder and the lightning and the sound of the shofar and the mountain smoking; and the people saw and trembled and stood at a distance."

Rashi comments on the words, "And all the people saw": "This teaches that there was not a single blind person among them. But how do we know there was no mute person among them? For it says, 'And all the people answered.' And

how know there was no deaf person among them? For it says, 'We will do and we will hear.'"

I would add that not only were they healed of any physical impairments they had, but each person experienced a multi-sensory event. They saw the words (see Rashi there). It was an auditory-visual, multi-sensory experience.

According to our Sages, each utterance spread a pleasant fragrance throughout the world:

The Talmud, (*Shabbos* 88b), teaches that with each of the Ten Commandments uttered at Sinai, there was also an experience of a wonderful fragrance. All the senses were engaged—the

experience encompassed all the senses. This event was engraved in our souls and in the souls of all future generations forever. This impression contributes to the eternal bond, the source of holiness: "Israel and the Torah are one;" "Who is like Your people Israel, one nation on earth?" At that moment, you were as one person with one heart and thus were able to receive the designation of "I am Hashem, your L-rd, who brought you out of the land of Egypt." We were able to fulfill the first two commandments. Not only did we say, "We will do and we will hear," but we also heard them directly from the Al-mighty.

May it be His will that we merit all these virtues, and hear the words of Hashem, "I am" and "You shall have no other gods" directly from the Al-mighty, and sense His G-dliness, as the *Sfas Emes* says, with perfect faith. And as the Maharal and others teach, that the entire Torah is included in these two commandments. And may we fully repent for the sin of the Golden Calf, recover the collateral—the two crowns—and ascend to Jerusalem to rebuild the Beis Habechirah speedily in our days. Amen.

two crowns—and ascend to Jerusalem to rebuild the Beis Habechirah speedily in our days. Amen.

Maharal Tzintz ב-י-ל-א ואמן

PEARLS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE GAON FROM PLOTZK

Words of Torah possess spiritual substance:

In our parashah, chapter 19, verses 7-8), it says: "And Moshe came and summoned the elders of the nation, and he set before them... And all the people answered... 'All that Hashem has spoken'... And Moshe brought back the words of the people to Hashem." The Maharal Tzintz's wonderful insight begins with a few questions: 1. What is meant by, "he set before them"—wording that implies Moshe placed some kind of object before them? 2. Why does the verse first mention the "elders of the nation" but later speaks of "the entire nation"? 3. The verse states, "And Moshe brought back the words of the people to Hashem." Here too, the verse seems to imply that Moshe presented some item to Hashem.

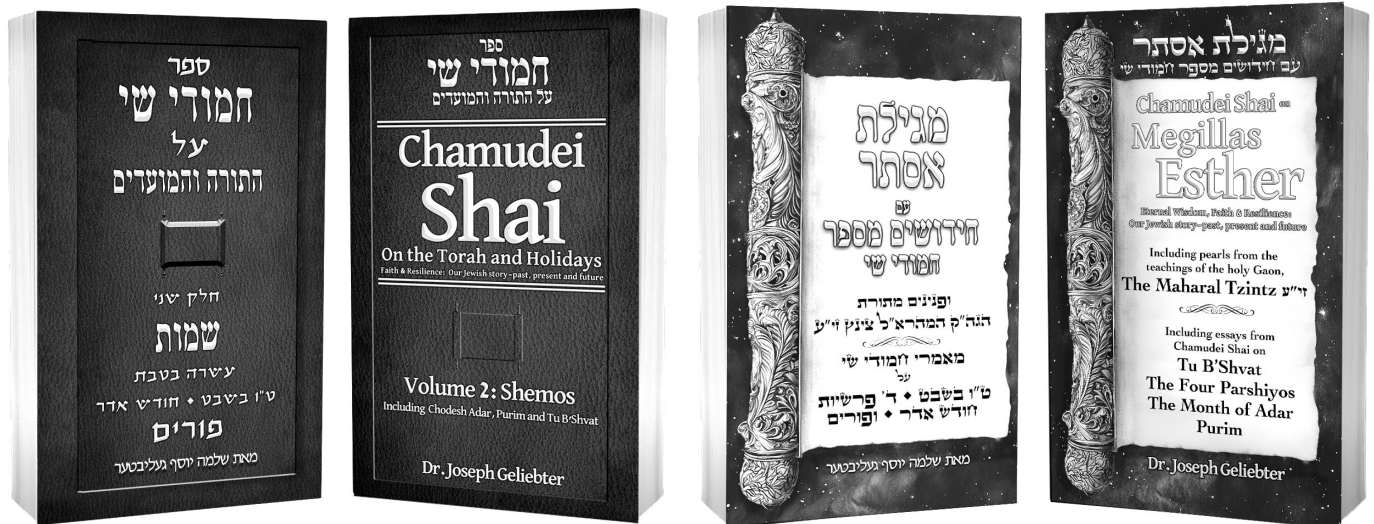
The Talmud teaches that every time Hashem uttered a word of Torah, an angel was created from it. Moshe Rabbeinu approached the "elders of the nation"—the most respected elders of the nation—and "he set before them," showing them, as a tangible

spiritual reality, the holy lights created by Hashem's words. The elders merited to perceive, in their mind's eye, the spiritual reality formed by Hashem's utterances.

Then, "all the people answered." The rest of the Jewish people, who were not able to see these holy lights with sensory vision, still experienced it as "Hashem had spoken"—speech alone, not a tangible reality. Nevertheless, they were granted the ability to sense the spiritual lights in a hidden manner—the spiritual part of their souls was able to perceive the holy lights, and they, too, accepted all the words upon themselves.

Holy lights were created not only by the words of Hashem but also by the holy words of the Jewish people when they declared: "All that Hashem has spoken, we will do." This created a holy force, a tangible spiritual reality of holiness. As the Zohar teaches, "There is no voice that is not heard On High." Through his immense holiness, Moshe Rabbeinu elevated the holy lights created by the holy words of the Jewish people and brought it about that these lights stood in the presence of Hashem. And this is the meaning of, "And Moshe brought back the words of the people"—Moshe delivered and presented the spiritual reality of the people's words before Hashem.

How fortunate are we! How good is our portion! We perceive Hashem's words, and Hashem perceives our words.



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