



Parashat Yitro 5770

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Avri in the Desert

B"H we are planning to publish the third in a series of HEBREW children's books about Avri, who left Egypt, experienced the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai and is now wandering in the desert. The journey of this young boy is the journey of our Nation seen through his eyes and experiences. You can be a partner by dedicating the whole book or part of the book in memory or in honor of someone

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10 Relationships between Maran Ha-Rav Kook and Various
Gedolei Yisrael that the Yeshiva World Should Know - Part 8

[Collected by Mordechai Friedfertig.

Ha-Rav Aviner Shlit"a encouraged spreading its message]

10. Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv Shlit"a: Ha-Rav Kook was greater than us!

R' Aryeh Levin, who often visited Ha-Rav Shlomo Eliyashuv, the author of "Leshem Shevo Ve-Achlama," met the latter's young grandson there – R' Yosef Shalom. Even then, R' Areyh recognized the unique greatness of R' Yosef Shalom. R' Aryeh once spoke with Maran Ha-Rav Kook about his sorrow that there was a wonderful, righteous, young Torah scholar who would be a great match for his (R' Aryeh's) daughter, but the young man did not respond favorably to his suggestion (either because he thought he had better options or he was not ready to marry). Maran Ha-Rav asked for the identity of the young man, and told that it was R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. Maran Ha-Rav called for the young man and spoke to him. The younger R. Eliyashuv then accepted the proposal and the couple married. Maran Ha-Rav Kook served as the Mesader Kiddushin. When Maran Ha-Rav's name comes up, Ha-Rav Elyashiv often said that he was honored that Maran Ha-Rav performed his wedding.

[Parashah Sheet "Shevet Ha-Re'eiyah #31]

Ha-Rav Yosef Buxbaum, the director of the journal "Moriah" and student of Ha-Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach related:

It once happened that one of the editors of the "Otzar Mefarshei Ha-Talmud" (Treasury of Talmudic Commentators) included a ruling of Maran Ha-Rav Kook, but another editor removed it. I asked him why he removed the ruling: was it because he raised a difficulty with it and it required further study? He answered: "I didn't even look into the issue. I just think that a ruling of Ha-Rav Kook is not appropriate for 'Otzar Mefarshei Ha-Talmud.'" I said to him: "From this moment, you are fired!" The editor did not accept his decision, and they went to Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv. Ha-Rav Elyashiv was shocked and said to the editor: "Did you know Ha-Rav Kook?! You should know – he was holy. He did not belong to our generation, and in his generation, they did not properly understand him. Reb Yosef was certainly permitted to fire you. I would have done the same thing."

[Weekly parashah sheet "Shevet Ha-Re'eiyah #31 and #50]

It is related that Rabbanit Elyashiv once heard words which impinged upon Maran Ha-Rav's honor, and it caused her so much pain that she physically suffered from it for many days.

[Tzadik Yesod Olam p. 232 and Parashah Sheet "Shevet Ha-Re'eiyah #50]

Ha-Rav Elyashiv once wrote a halachic ruling, and after he finished someone showed him a different opinion which Maran Ha-Rav had written on the subject. Ha-Rav Elyashiv immediately ripped up his ruling and changed his opinion to that of Maran Ha-Rav.

[Parashah Sheet "Shevet Ha-Re'eiyah #50]

Ha-Rav Elyashiv once mentioned a particular teaching of Maran Ha-Rav. Someone who was present said that Rabbi so-and-so, one of the greatest Rabbis of the generation, said otherwise. Ha-Rav Elyashiv simply responded: Ha-Rav Kook was greater than us!

[Parashah Sheet "Shevet Ha-Re'eiyah #50]

On the Parashah

The Giving and Receiving of the Torah

Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, pointed out that we must carefully distinguish between the giving of the Torah and the receiving of the Torah. He gave an explanation about this which he had learned from his father, Maran Ha-Rav Kook, an idea which was both simple and deep. On the one hand, the Master of the Universe descends to us. "And Hashem descended on Mt. Sinai" (Shemot 19:20). Hashem lowers himself to meet us. "Who remembers us in our lowly state" (Tehillim 136:23). On the other hand, since Hashem descends, we are "invited" to meet him by exalting ourselves.

This week's parashah, Yitro, and Mishpatim, the one for next week, are a pair. In Parashat Yitro we are given an overview in which all 613 mitzvot are hinted at within the Ten Commandments, while in Mishpatim the details are included. At the end of this parashah, we see our elevation: "They saw the G-d of Israel, and under His feet was the likeness of sapphire brickwork, and it was like the essence of the heaven in purity" (Shemot 2:10).

Hashem's descent and our ascent are one amazing meeting.

Rav Aviner on...

Giving Tzedakah to Beggars

Q: When I visit the Kotel, there are so many people asking for money, should I give money to the beggars? What about people on the street? What about people who knock on my door and ask for money?

A: There are various issues involved:

Most Beggars are Swindlers - The Halachah is that we do not give money to beggars until we clarify that they are truly poor. This is a "Takanat Chazal" (Ruling of our Sages) since most beggars are swindlers. This ruling is found in the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 251:10) and it applies to this day. Rabbis estimate that ninety percent of people who ask for money today are swindlers. If someone asks for money we do not give it until he provides verification from a reliable Rabbi. If someone asks for food, however, we give him immediately. What if he is being deceptive? It is a potentially life-threatening situation, and we therefore provide food without delay. Today, most beggars in Israel do not ask for food because there are many soup kitchens, and if you offer them food, they say that they prefer money.

Is Giving Tzedakah to someone who is not poor a Mitzvah? - The halachic authorities discuss if one fulfills the mitzvah of giving tzedakah if the recipient is in fact not poor. They point to the Gemara in Baba Batra (9a and see Rishonim and Achronim) and they also discuss whether the intention of the giver matters, but for certain he loses out on the mitzvah by giving that money to someone who is not truly poor. Perhaps you will say that giving tzedakah is still worthwhile even if the person is not poor since it strengthens one's personal character traits (tikkun midot), as the Rambam explained in his commentary to Pirkei Avot (3:15); that by performing an act over and over, one will achieve proper characteristic traits. This, however, does not occur when one is performing an act which is not beneficial. A person is cruel if he does not give to the poor, but he is not kind if he gives to the wealthy. We have to give to truly poor people. A person should not buckle under emotional pressure from a beggar: I have many children and a husband who is sick, you have a kippah but you

are not really observant, you give a shekel and they throw it down, etc... If a person was poor before he asked for money at the Kotel, after a day he would no longer be considered poor: They collect 1000 shekels a day!

Rabbinic Verification - Even providing rabbinic verification is problematic today. Anyone can print a Rabbi's letter or signature off the internet in thirty seconds. One time some people from a tzedakah organization in Ashdod came and asked for my signature. I did not know them and asked if they had other Rabbis' signatures. They told me that they had the support of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. I said: If so, I will blindly support it. Please send me the letter. When I received it, I saw that in the signature there was an extra "alef" in the last name "Schneerson" and instead of being signed by the last Rebbe – Ha-Rav Menachem Mendel, it was signed by the previous Rebbe – Ha-Rav Yosef Yitzchak, who died almost sixty years ago! It was a forgery! Often times there are people who request money for yeshivot or organizations which do not exist, never existed, and will never exist. One time I signed a letter in support of giving money to the poor. I found out that they were giving \$1000 to anyone about to be drafted into "Nachal Ha-Charedi" (Ultra-Orthodox unit in the army) to convince them not to join. They claimed they were poor: They were in great spiritual poverty if they were about to join Tzahal. I called and requested my name be removed from the letter, but they did not. I called again, no response. I called again, no response. I sent a letter, no response. I sent a letter from a lawyer and they called: "Why not talk like a mensch? Come on, let's talk," etc... We have to be extremely careful about where we give our money.

In sum: We only give tzedakah to people who we can verify are poor or to trustworthy organizations. Give to one, two, three trustworthy organizations. It is not possible to provide for every poor person in any event. Most beggars are not evil people, they are mentally and emotionally unstable. We do not judge them, but we only give tzedakah to genuinely poor people.

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