

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT YITRO

Q-1. (a) How do we know that *Yitro* arrived at the camp of *Bnei Yisrael* (1) before *Matan Torah* (4 proofs)? or (2) after *Matan Torah* (4 proofs)? (3) after converting from being an idolater to being a believer in *Hashem*? **(b)** (1) *Yitro* heard about which 2 events that *Hashem* had done for *Bnei Yisrael*? (2) Why did *Yitro* have to hear about both events before believing that *Hashem* selected *Bnei Yisrael*? **(c)** (1) What are each of the 7 names of *Yitro*, and what do they each signify? (2) Why, specifically, was the letter “vav” added to his name *Yeter* (2 views)? **(d)** (1) When did *Moshe* start judging the people? (2) Why did *Yitro* suggest that *Moshe* appoint judges who were (i) *anshei chayil* (well-off men)? (ii) *yirei Elokim* (fearing *Hashem*)? (iii) *anshei emet* (truthful men)? (iv) *sonei batza* (despising money)? (3) How do we know that when *beit din* announces its decision, the litigants must stand? (4) On what weekday may a civil suit be tried (i) by *Torah* law? (ii) *mi-derabanan*? (5) (i) On what weekday may a capital case not be tried? (ii) Why? (6) What are 8 additional differences between the judicial processes for civil cases versus capital cases? (7) What 5 capital cases must be tried by the *beit din* of 71? (*Shemot* 18:1,5,13,21-22)

A-1. (a) (1) (i) *Matan Torah* is described later in chapter 20; (ii) “*Yitro* heard” that *Hashem* took *Bnei Yisrael* from *Mitzrayim* (18:1), but he did not hear that He gave them the *Torah*; (iii) *Yitro* arrived right after *Bnei Yisrael*’s war with *Amalek* (17:8-16), which happened before *Matan Torah*; (iv) *Yitro* said he now knew that *Hashem* is greater than the gods for taking them from *Mitzrayim* (8:11), not mentioning *Matan Torah*; (2) (i) *Yitro* went to where “*Moshe* had been camped, *Har Elokim*” (18:5), but *Bnei Yisrael* camped there for a year after *Matan Torah*; (ii) *Moshe* said, “I make known “*chukei haElokim ve’et Torotav*” (*Hashem*’s statutes and His *Torah*) (8:16), indicating that *Bnei Yisrael* already had been given the *Torah* at *Matan Torah*; (iii) *Moshe* sent off *Yitro* (18:27) in the 2nd year, which was after *Matan Torah*; (iv) *Devarim* 1:6-7 says that *Moshe* took the advice from *Yitro* to appoint judges – then *Bnei Yisrael* left *Sinai* (1:13-19), which was after *Matan Torah* (*Ramban*). (3) The *gematria* of the name “*Yitro*” (616) equals both “*komer haya la’avoda zara*” (he had been an idolatrous priest) and “*haTorah*”, which he had accepted (*Ba’al haTurim*). **(b)** (1) (i) The splitting of the *Yam Suf*; (ii) the defeat of *Amalek* by *Bnei Yisrael* (*Rashi*). (2) The splitting of the *Yam Suf* could have been a punishment for *Pharaoh* for defying *Hashem*, not necessarily for the benefit of *Bnei Yisrael*, but the defeat of *Amalek* clearly was for the benefit of *Bnei Yisrael* (*Ohr haChaim*). **(c)** (1) (i) *Yeter* was his non-Jewish name; (ii) *Yitro* became his name when he converted, and the “vav” was added to signify that a *parasha* with his name was being added to the *Torah* when he helped *Moshe* judge *Bnei Yisrael*; (iii) *Chovav* indicates his loving of *Hashem*; (iv) *Chaveir* designates him as *Hashem*’s “companion”; (v) *Reu’el* indicates his being *Hashem*’s “friend”; (vi) *Putiel* refers to his rejecting *avoda zara*; (vii) *Keini* means that he was being zealous (*kana’i*) for *Hashem* and acquiring (*kana*) *Torah*; (2) (i) When *Efron* sold *Me’orat haMachpeila* to *Avraham*, the *Torah* lessened the name of *Efron* by removing the letter vav (*Bereishit* 23:16) because he lied to *Avraham* about giving the cave as a gift, and the missing vav, which was added to the non-Jewish name of *Yitro* compensated for the vav taken from *Efron* (*Mechilta*). (ii) The vav represents his 6 additional names (*Ba’al haTurim*). **(d)** (1) After he brought down the 2nd *luchot* on *Yom Kippur* (*Rashi*). (2) The judges should (i) be wealthy, not needing to flatter others or play favorites (*Rashi*). (ii) be unafraid of other people, but only fear *Hashem* (*ibn Ezra*). (iii) inspire confidence that their word is reliable (*Rashi*). (iv) promote fairness, since they spurn improperly obtained money (*Ramban*). (3) 18:13 says, “*vayeishev Moshe lishpot et ha’am*” (and *Moshe* sat to judge the people), and “*vayamode ha’am al Moshe*” (and the people stood by *Moshe*) (*Ramban* – *Hilchot Sanhedrin* 21:3). (4) (i) Any weekday; (ii) not on *erev Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*; (5) *erev Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*; (ii) one who is found guilty of a capital crime must be executed the following day, which cannot be *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*; (6) (i) civil cases are judged by 3 judges, but capital cases, by 23 judges; (ii) in civil cases, the judges open the debate with either a favorable or unfavorable statement, but in capital cases only, they must start with a favorable statement; (iii) in civil cases, a verdict for acquittal or conviction must have a majority of at least one, but in capital cases there must be a majority of at least one for acquittal and a majority of at least two for conviction; (iv) in civil cases, the verdict, either for acquittal or conviction, may be reversed, but in capital cases, only convictions may be reversed, and acquittals may not be reversed; (v) in civil cases, both the judges and the disciples in the courtroom may argue for acquittal or conviction, but in capital cases, only the judges, but not the disciples, may argue for conviction; (vi) in civil cases, a judge who argued for conviction may subsequently argue for acquittal, and vice versa, but in capital cases, a judge who argued for conviction may then argue for acquittal, while a judge who argued for acquittal may not subsequently argue for conviction, even though he may put himself on the side of conviction when the verdict is about to be decided; (vii) in civil cases, the trial is held during the daytime, while the verdict may be reached at night, but in capital cases, the trial must be held and the verdict must be reached in the daytime; (viii) in civil cases, the verdict for acquittal or conviction may be reached on the same day as the trial, but for capital cases, a verdict for acquittal may be reached on the same day, while a verdict for conviction may not be reached until the following day (*Hilchot Sanhedrin* 11:1-3). (7) (i) a *sheivet* seduced to *avoda zara*; (ii) a false *navi*; (iii) a capital crime by a *Kohen Gadol*; (iv) an *ir nidachat* (condemned city); (v) a *sotah* subjected to drinking the bitter waters (*Hilchot Sanhedrin* 5:1).

Q-2. (a) (1) In preparation for *Matan Torah*, to which group of people did *Moshe* talk first? (2) Why did he talk to them first (5 views)? **(b)** When 19:3 says, “*Moshe* ascended to *Elokim*, and *Hashem* called to him”, why the change in Name? **(c)** (1) Why does the *Torah* not state the date of *Matan Torah*? (2) On what day of the week was *Matan Torah*? (3) On what calendar date was *Matan Torah* (2 views)? (*Shemot* 19:1-3)

A-2. (a) (1) *Moshe* spoke first to the women, who are called “*Beit Ya’akov*”, then he spoke to the men, who are called *Bnei Yisrael* (*Rashi*). (2) (i) Since women are obligated in doing *mitzvot* at age 12, a year before men, *Moshe* prepared them first to accept the *mitzvot*; (ii) since mothers at home are the primary transmitters of *mitzvot* to children, they needed to come first; (iii) when *Hashem* gave the 1st *mitzvah* directly to *Adam*, but not to *Chava*, she sinned and caused him to sin, and *Moshe* let women know their observance is as important as men’s; (iv) *Moshe* wanted the women to accept the *Torah* first so that they could not claim that they accepted it only to satisfy their husbands and that they would receive the same punishments as do men for violations of the *mitzvot*; (v) *Hashem* honored the women first since *Bnei Yisrael* were redeemed from *Mitzrayim* due to the merit of righteous women (*Shemot Raba*). **(b)** *Moshe* ascended so that “*Elokim*”, Who rules with strict justice, would tell *Bnei Yisrael* the *Aseret haDibrot*, but He spoke to *Moshe* in a more intimate manner, as “*Hashem*”, reflecting His Mercy (*Ramban*). **(c)** (1) It teaches that for *talmud Torah*, no date is more important than any other, and we must engage in *talmud Torah* eagerly each day, as if *Hashem* gave the *Torah* to us on that day (*Rashi*). (2) *Shabbat*; (3) (i) according to *Rav Yosi*, *Bnei Yisrael* arrived at *Har Sinai* on *Rosh Chodesh Sivan*, a Sunday, and received the *Torah* on *Shabbat*, which was 7 *Sivan*; (ii) according to the *Chachamim*, *Rosh Chodesh Sivan* was on Monday, and *Matan Torah*, which was on was on *Shabbat*, occurred on 6 *Sivan* (*Shabbat* 86b-87a).

Q-3. (a) (1) Why did *Hashem* term *Bnei Yisrael* a “*mamlechet kohanim*” (kingdom of priests), since not all of *Bnei Yisrael* were *kohanim* (3 reasons)? (2) How do we know that before *Matan Torah*, *Hashem* cured all members of *Bnei Yisrael* who were (i) blind? (ii) deaf? (iii) lame? **(b)** Why does the *Torah* say, *Moshe* “put before” (*va-yasem lifneihem*) *Bnei Yisrael* what *Hashem* had said, instead of saying that *Moshe* spoke to (*va-yedabeir el*) *Bnei Yisrael* (2 views)? **(c)** (1) Since *Moshe* presented the Words of *Hashem* to the *zekeinim* (elders), why did the all of *Bnei Yisrael* respond? (2) When *Bnei Yisrael* said, “We will do everything that *Hashem* has spoken,” why did *Moshe* need to relay this response to *Hashem*, Who is Omniscient (2 views)? **(d)** Which 3 rites did *Bnei Yisrael* perform, which were required before they entered the covenant at *Sinai*? (*Shemot* 19:6-10, 17)

A-3. (a) (1) (i) At *matan Torah*, *Bnei Yisrael* were on such a high spiritual level that they all were worthy of eating *korbanot* like *kohanim*, but after the *cheit ha’eigel*, *Hashem* withdrew this privilege from all of *Bnei Yisrael* who sinned, except from the men of *Sheivet Levi*, who did not sin; (ii) the role of *Bnei Yisrael* should be to act like *kohanim*, who are aloof from the repulsive practices of other nations (*Mechilta*). (iii) The role of a *kohen* is to teach the Words of *Hashem* to others, and all of *Bnei Yisrael*, in *yemot haMashi’ach*, are destined to teach mankind to recognize and serve Him (*Sforno*). (2) (i) 20:15 says, “*ve-chol ha’am ro’im*” (the entire people were seeing), since no one was blind; (ii) 24:7 says, “*kol asher amar Hashem na’aseh venishma*” ([the entire people said,] “all that *Hashem* said we will do and we will hear”, since no one was deaf; (iii) 19:17 says, “*vayityatzvu betachtit ha-har*” (they stood at the foot of the mountain), i.e., all could stand because no one was lame (*Medrash Tanchuma*). **(b)** “Putting before them” means that *Moshe* (1) taught *Bnei Yisrael*, in addition to telling them (*Sa’adia Gaon*). (2) gave *Bnei Yisrael* a choice of whether or not to act the way that *Hashem* commanded (*Ramban*). **(c)** (1) *Moshe* placed it before the *zekeinim* at an assembly of all of *Bnei Yisrael*, so that *Bnei Yisrael* would consult with them, but instead, *Bnei Yisrael*

responded, without consulting the *zekeinim*, that they will follow *Hashem* (*Ramban*). (2) (i) This teaches that a messenger who is sent to get a response should give the response to the sender, even if the Sender already knows the answer (*Rashi*). (ii) *Moshe* wanted to praise *Bnei Yisrael* for accepting everything (*Ohr haChaim*). (d) (1) *Mila*, which *Bnei Yisrael* did in *Mitzrayim* before eating the *korban Pesach* (12:48); (2) they immersed themselves and their clothing in a *mikvah* (19:10); (3) they offered *korbanot* (24:5) (*Rambam – Hilchot Isurei Biah* 13:1-3).

Q-4. (a) (1) Why is “The Ten Commandments” an incorrect name for the *Aseret haDibrot* (the Decalogue) (2 reasons)? (2) Why did *Chazal* remove the recitation of the *Aseret haDibrot* from the daily *tefila*? (b) The *Aseret haDibrot* (1) contains how many letters? (2) signifying what? (3) specifically lists how many of the 613 *mitzvot*? (4) Which 3 positive *mitzvot* are included? (5) Which 11 negative *mitzvot* are included? (c) Who was the first pharmacist in the *Torah*? (d) (1) How many of the 10 *dibrot* did *Bnei Yisrael* hear directly from *Hashem* (2 views)? (2) Why are the first 2 *dibrot* in one *parasha* (paragraph), unlike the other 8 which are separate *parshiot* (2 reasons)? (*Shemot* 20:1-14)

A-4. (a) (1) (i) There are 613 commandments (*mitzvot*), not 10, and the *Aseret haDibrot* categorizes all 613 *mitzvot* into 10 categories of *mitzvot* (*Sa'adia Gaon*). (ii) The early Christians claimed that *mitzvot* like *kashrut*, *mila* and *taharat ha-mishpacha* were no longer necessary, and only the 10 “commandments” in the *Aseret haDibrot* must be observed, and giving the *Aseret haDibrot* the name, “The Ten Commandments”, reflects Christian thought; (2) reciting the *Aseret haDibrot* had been a prominent part of the daily *avoda* in the *Beit haMikdash* and in the *tefila* after the *Churban*, but *Chazal* decided to reduce the prominence of the *Aseret haDibrot*, so that *Bnei Yisrael* would recognize that all of the 613 *mitzvot* are equally important (*Berachot* 12a). (b) (1) 620 letters; (2) the *Aseret haDibrot* are the essence of the *Torah*'s 613 *mitzvot* and 7 *mitzvot de-rabannan* (*Mechilta*). (3) 14; (4) To (i) believe that *Hashem* exists, (ii) sanctify the *Shabbat*, (iii) honor one's parents (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvot* 25,31,33). (5) Not to (iv) believe in any Divinity except *Hashem*, (v) make a graven image, (vi) bow down to worship an idol, (vii) worship an idol in any other customary way, (viii) swear in vain, (ix) work on *Shabbat*, (x) murder an innocent person, (xi) commit adultery, (xii) kidnap a person, (xiii) bear false witness against anyone, (xiv) covet another the belongings of another person (*Mitzvot* 26-30,32,34-38). (c) *Hashem*, Who gave *Moshe* 2 tablets (*M. Reinstein*). (d) (1) *Bnei Yisrael* heard (i) all of the *Aseret haDibrot* from *Hashem*, *be-dibur echad* (in one utterance) (*Rashi*). (ii) only the 1st and 2nd *dibrot* – to believe in *Hashem* and not to practice idolatry – directly from *Hashem* and the other 8 from *Moshe* (*Makkot* 24a). (2) It indicates that (i) *Bnei Yisrael* heard only these 2 *dibrot*, and not the other 8 *dibrot*, directly from *Hashem*; (ii) fulfilling each these two *dibrot* depends on fulfilling the other *dibra* (*Ohr Torah*).

Q-5. (a) (1) How does one fulfill the *mitzvah* of “*Anochi Hashem ...*” (I am *Hashem ...*)? (2) Why did *Hashem* address all of the *dibrot* to *Bnei Yisrael* in the plural (e.g. “*atem re'item*” – you have seen – 19:4), but state each individual *dibra* in the singular? (b) (1) What are 4 kinds of “vain oaths”? (2) Why will *Hashem* not forgive one who swears falsely? (c) (1) What does the *Torah* add by saying that observing *Shabbat* is for “*ata u-vincha u-vitecha*” (you and your son and your daughter), since by commanding “you”, your children, in their own right, also are commanded? (2) How do we fulfill “*zachor et yom haShabbat le-kadesh*” (remember the *Shabbat* to sanctify it)? (d) (1) Why does the *mitzvah* to honor one's parents follow the previous 4 *dibrot*? (2) Since one must rise in the presence of his teacher, if one's son is his teacher, does he rise for his son? (3) Is one required to honor his parent after the death of the parent? (4) Why is a parent prohibited from being too exacting with respect to his or her honor? (e) How does one violate “*lo tirchak*” (do not murder) without physically harming someone? (f) What are 4 negative results of “*lo tinaf*” (committing adultery)? (g) How do we know that “*lo tignov*” (do not steal) refers to kidnapping, not to stealing money? (h) Why does the *Torah* prohibit us from coveting other people's possessions (2 views)? (i) Why do the monetary laws in *Parashat Mishpatim* follow the *Aseret haDibrot*? (*Shemot* 20:7-14)

A-5. (a) (1) We must know and believe that *Hashem* exists, that from Him everything in the universe comes about, and that we are obligated to serve Him; (2) it is a warning that each individual person will be punished for not following any of the *mitzvot*, and one should not think that *Hashem* will judge according to the majority who follow the *mitzvot*, and not punish an individual who does not follow them (*Ramban*). (b) (1) Swearing (i) that something known is not so, e.g., that a marble pillar is made of gold; (ii) that something known is so, e.g., that a stone is a stone; (iii) to violate a particular *mitzvah*; (iv) to do something that he cannot do, e.g., to not sleep for 3 days in a row (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvah* 30). (2) By swearing in the Name of *Hashem*, one indicates that just as *Hashem* exists, one's own words are true, and as a result, one who swears falsely denies His Existence, which is unforgivable (*ibn Ezra*). (c) (1) Parents must ensure that their minor children, who are not yet obligated to observe *mitzvot*, do not violate *Shabbat* (*Rashi*). (2) By reciting *kiddush* at the beginning of the *Shabbat* and *havdala* at the conclusion of the *Shabbat* (*Rambam – Hilchot Shabbat* 29:1). (d) (1) Just as one must honor his “Primary Father”, i.e., *Hashem*, by performing the first 4 *dibrot*, he must honor his parents who are *Hashem*'s partners in his creation, by performing the 5th *dibra* (*Ramban*). (2) No, a son, who is the teacher of his father, must rise for his father; (3) yes; (4) a parent may not put his or her child in a position where the child may stumble with respect to giving him or her honor (*Rambam – Hilchot Mamrim* 6:4-5,8). (e) By bearing false witness, gossiping about or giving harmful advice to someone (*ibn Ezra*). (f) (1) Children will be unable to fulfill the *mitzvah* to honor their father, since they will not know who their father really is; (2) a person inadvertently may commit incest with a sibling or other relative, since he will not be sure what their relationship to him is; (3) it constitutes *gezeila* (robbing) a man of his relationship with his wife; (4) it leads to jealousy, which can result in murder (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvah* 35). (g) Just as the prohibitions on murder and adultery are capital offences, stealing is a capital offence, which can occur only by kidnapping a person, not by stealing money (*Rashi*). (h) (1) Coveting someone's possession may cause us to stop at nothing to obtain it, including theft and murder (*Mitzvah* 38); (2) recognizing that a possession is not available to us, since *Hashem* has granted it to another person, demonstrates our faith in *Hashem* by not desiring it (*ibn Ezra*). (i) After *Hashem* lists a person's obligations toward his fellow human beings, e.g., not to steal or testify falsely, He explains the details of how to fulfill these obligations (*Ramban*).

Q-6. (a) After prohibiting the making idols in the *Aseret haDibrot* (20:3-5), why does the *Torah* repeat the prohibition to make silver and gold idols (6 views)? (b) Why did the *Torah* prohibit (1) using metal instruments to shape the stones of the *mizbei'ach* (altar)? (2) having steps on the ramp of the *mizbei'ach*, in order to prevent immodesty when separating one's legs, since the *kohanim* were required to wear pants which protected their modesty (2 views)? (*Shemot* 20:20-23)

A-6. (a) This verse prohibits (1) making images of angels or other heavenly beings; (2) making and worshipping an “image” of *Hashem*; (3) cursing *Hashem*, when something bad happens, since we must praise Him both for the good and the bad (*Mechilta*). (4) appointing judges (“*elohim*”) who pay for their appointments with gold or silver (*Sanhedrin* 7b). (5) creating an intermediary between *Hashem* and man (*Sefer ha'ikarim*). (6) making an image, not for worship, but only as an ornament (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvah* 39). (b) (1) Since the goal of the construction of the *mizbei'ach* was to grant forgiveness of sins and to provide blessings of peace, the use of metal, which is utilized to construct destructive weapons, was an improper component of the *mizbei'ach* (*Mitzvah* 40). (2) (i) While there would be no actual immodesty, the appearance of immodesty had to be avoided (*Rashi*). (ii) This teaches us that if we really be concerned about “shaming” stones through immodesty, we certainly must avoid shaming people (*Mitzvah* 41).

Q-7. In the *haftara*, when the angels proclaim, “*Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh Hashem*” (Holy, holy, holy is *Hashem*), why do they say the word “*kadosh*” 3 times? (*Yeshayahu* 6:3)

A-7. The angels declare that *Hashem* is *kadosh* (a) in the high heavens above; (b) on the earth; and (c) forever and to all eternity (*Targum Yonatan*).