**Let’s Do Breakfast**

“Moshe descended the mountain to the people” (19:14)

“What time do we land?”

“In about two hours, Mr. President.”

“Okay — I’m going to need about an hour to have a shower, freshen up and change my clothes before I can meet the Prime Minister. Can you radio ahead and fix up a meeting at about twelve? Actually, make it twelve-thirty. I haven’t slept a wink on this flight, so I’ll need to close my eyes for twenty minutes or so. Oh, and I could do with a light breakfast when I wake up — just a roll and some coffee, a little cereal. Make that real coffee. Hey, is there any real need to have this meeting as soon as we arrive? Couldn’t we postpone till the afternoon?”

Moshe, the quintessential Jewish leader, went “from the mountain to the people.” He didn’t take a break. He didn’t take a pit-stop. Moshe ignored his personal affairs completely and went straight to work. From the mountain to the people.

* Based on Rashi

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**Seeing The Sound Of Music**

“And all the people saw the voices” (20:15)

One winter’s day in a small village in Poland, there arrived a frail figure carrying a small black leather box.

It was still early in the morning, the pale winter sunlight barely coloring the ashen faces of the houses. The man made his way to the town square. He rubbed his hands together and blew warm air between them. A cloud of mist emerged from the other side of his clasped palms and snaked its way upward, catching the rays of the rising sun as it faded away.

He opened the box and assembled three black cylindrical sections of a clarinet.

He started to play, at first slowly and hauntingly. The sound was so beautiful and compelling that very soon, yawning faces started to appear at the windows. Children were pressing their faces to the panes. He started to pick up the tempo. The sound was so delightful, so sweet, that very soon, people emerged into the street and spontaneously started to dance.

The music crescendoed in wave after wave. The unbelievable sweetness of the sound gilded the faces of the dancers with delight.

Into this scene stumbled a deaf man. He was quite convinced that everyone had taken leave of their senses. Here, for no reason whatsoever, was half the town dancing in the square at six o’clock in the morning!

If he’d been a little bit more discerning, he would have realized that it was the voice of the clarinet and its beautiful music that was the reason for all this dancing.

When the Torah was given at Sinai, the people ‘saw’ the voices. They experienced kinesthesia - the reversal of sensory perception. Seeing Sound. Hearing Sight.

When the Torah was given at Sinai, Hashem radiated the light of His Presence on the whole Jewish People as one. They experienced this as angels dancing.

When they saw the angels dancing, they understood that it was because of the overwhelming sweetness and beauty of the Holy Torah. And, as it were, they craned their necks and strained their ears to hear its sublime melody.

Compared to angels they were somewhat spiritually ‘deaf’ because they had never experienced such sounds. Nevertheless, they wanted to try and at least get a ‘glimpse’ of the sound.

G-d opened their eyes, and they all saw this overwhelming joy, so that even if they could not experience the music itself clearly, they could experience its great happiness.

* Based on Degel Machane Ephraim

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*continued on page four*
Hearing of the miracles Hashem has performed for the Bnei Yisrael, Moshe’s father-in-law, Yisro, arrives with Moshe’s wife and sons, reuniting the family in the wilderness. Yisro is so impressed by Moshe’s detailing of the Exodus from Egypt that he converts and joins the Jewish People.

Seeing that the only judicial authority for the entire Jewish nation is Moshe himself, Yisro suggests that subsidiary judges be appointed to adjudicate the smaller matters, leaving Moshe free to attend to larger issues. Moshe accepts his advice.

The Children of Israel arrive at Mt. Sinai where the Torah is offered to them. After they accept, Hashem charges Moshe to instruct the people not to approach the mountain, and to prepare themselves for three days in order to receive the Torah.

On the third day, amidst thunder and lightning, Hashem’s voice emanates from the smoke-enshrouded mountain, and He begins speaking to the Jewish People, giving them the Ten Commandments:

- Believe in Hashem
- Don’t have other gods
- Don’t use Hashem’s name in vain
- Observe the Shabbos
- Honor your parents
- Don’t murder
- Don’t commit adultery
- Don’t kidnap
- Don’t testify falsely
- Don’t covet.

After receiving the first two commandments, the Jewish People, overwhelmed by this experience of the Divine, request that Moshe relay Hashem’s word to them. Hashem instructs Moshe to caution the Jewish People regarding their responsibility to be faithful to the One who spoke to them.
1. News of which two events motivated Yisro to come join the Jewish people?
2. Yisro had six other names. What are they?
3. Who informed Pharaoh of Moshe killing the Egyptian?
4. Why did Moshe tell Yisro all that Hashem had done for the Jewish People?
5. According to the Midrash quoted by Rashi, how did Yisro respond when he was told about the destruction of Egypt?
6. Who is considered as if he enjoys the splendor of the Shechina?
7. On what day did Moshe sit to judge the Jewish People?
8. Who is considered a co-partner in creation?
9. “Moshe sat to judge the people, and the people stood before Moshe…” What bothered Yisro about this arrangement?
10. In Rashi 18:19, what does “Hey Mem Lamed Chaf” spell? What does it mean?
11. Why did Yisro return to his own land?
12. On what day did the Jewish People arrive at Sinai?
13. How did the encampment at Sinai differ from the other encampments?
14. What was Hashem’s original plan for Matan Torah? What was the response of the Jewish People?
15. How many times greater is the ‘measure of reward’ than the ‘measure of punishment’?
16. How is it derived that “don’t steal” refers to kidnapping?
17. In response to hearing the Torah given at Sinai, how far backwards did the Jewish people retreat in fear?
18. Upon what must the copper altar rest?
19. Why does the use of iron tools profane the altar?
20. The altar must have a ramp and not steps, so the Kohenim can conduct themselves in a respectful manner. What lesson does this teach?

**Bonus Question?**

“Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Behold I come to you in the thickness of cloud, in order that the people will hear when I speak to you…”’ (19:9) What does it mean that Hashem appeared to Moshe in the ‘thickness of cloud’? Why was that necessary ‘in order for the people to hear’ Hashem speaking to Moshe?

**I Didn’t Know That!**

The public Torah reading is a symbolic reenactment of the giving of the Torah at Sinai: The Gabbai, who decides which person to call to the Torah, symbolizes Hashem, who chose the Jewish people to receive the Torah. The person called to the Torah represents the Jewish people. And the person reading the Torah is Moshe, the ‘broker’ between the Jewish people and Hashem.

* Taamei Haminhagim 328 - Heard from Rabbi Sholem Fishbane

**Haftorah: Yeshayahu 6:1-13, 7:1-6, 9:5,6**

The revelation of the Shechina at Sinai which is the subject of this week’s Parsha is mirrored in the Haftorah by a revelation of the Shechina to the prophet Yishayahu.

No, No, After You...

The nature of most people is to want to be first. To demonstrate their superiority over others. This is the driving force behind the desire to have money and power. I’m better than you! You go second!

And even when we allow others to go first, when we put them in front of ourselves, it’s usually to demonstrate what elevated character traits we have — in other words — elevated over you!

In the kedusha (holiness) that we say at least twice a day, we borrow a prayer from the angels to magnify the glory of the Almighty.

We say “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the L-rd of Hosts. The whole world is filled with His Glory.”

Man is not an angel. When the angels say kedusha, they begin by calling to each other, as if to say “You go first, because you are greater than me.” To which comes the reply “No, you are greater than me!” Finally, they all praise Hashem together.

The angels repeat the world ‘holy’ three times. Anything which is done three times is considered to have permanence and perpetuity. Thus the angels never cease saying ‘holy,’ for Hashem is infinitely Holy.

* Based on The Midrash Says
**How Exact is Exact?**

Is it possible to be perfectly exact in timing and measuring? This issue arises in our Gemara in regard to two cases which represent two categories of exactness.

The first is an exactness of timing where human effort is not involved. A sheep gives birth to twin males in its maiden birth and their heads come forth from the womb simultaneously. Do we assume the possibility that both were born at exactly the same moment and award both lambs to the kohen, or do we say that there is no such thing as perfectly equal timing, and therefore only one goes to the kohen?

Rabbi Yossi Haglili rules that we can assume that both were born at the exact same moment and, therefore, both lambs go to the kohen. The majority view of Sages is that it is impossible for them both to have been born at exactly the same time, and therefore only one goes to the kohen.

Rabbi Eliezer rules that each of the cities brings a calf for atonement, because it is possible for them to both be exactly the same distance from the corpse, as human measurement has concluded. The majority view of the Sages, however, follows the same pattern as in the first category, where human effort is not involved. They rule that it is impossible for the measurement to be exact and for the cities being exactly equidistant from the corpse. Both cities, therefore, must bring one calf in partnership, and the representatives of each city declare that if their city was farther away, and therefore exempt from any obligation, their portion of the jointly owned calf should revert to the other city which is obligated.

---

**Who’s Out First?**

“A klall (a general term) followed by a prat (a particular one).”

“A klall which requires a prat (for clarification) and a prat which requires a klall (for clarification).”

These are the fourth and seventh of Rabbi Yishmael’s list of 13 rules for interpretation of the Torah which we recite daily in our morning prayers as a minimal fulfillment of our obligation to study Torah daily.

Illustrations of all three methods mentioned in these two rules are provided by our Gemara in explaining how we deduce from the Torah that only a first born male animal is considered a “bechor” which must be given to the kohen and offered as a sacrifice.

Klall followed by prat — The general term “bechor” could be understood as any first-born, male or female. The particular term “zachar” limits it to males only.

Klall which requires a prat — The general term “bechor zachar” would be understood as a first-born male born by cesarean section, since he is both a male and the firstborn. It is only the particular term “peter rechem” which clarifies that a bechor is only a male who is the first to come forth from its mother’s womb.

Prat which requires a klall — The particular term “peter rechem” could be understood as including a male born after an earlier offspring delivered by cesarean section because it is the first male to come forth from it’s mother’s womb. It is the general term “bechor” which clarifies that a bechor must have both qualities — the first to be born and the first to come forth from the womb.

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**Building For The Future**

“And Yisrael camped there opposite the mountain” (19:2)

At the time of the Tower of Bavel when the world rebelled against Hashem and tried to build a city and tower that would reach to the Heavens, Hashem made it impossible for them to understand each other’s language. The project thus failed.

Why did Hashem choose to foil their designs by confusing their languages? Why couldn’t He have decreed that the project just plain fail?

It certainly wouldn’t have been the last building project to have failed because of a poor architect or defective labor!

The giving of the Torah at Sinai was predicated on the absolute unity of the Jewish People.

Just as Hashem is One, and His Torah is indivisible from Him, so too the receiving of the Torah has to be in perfect unity.

Only at Sinai were the Jewish People united like one man with one heart.

The generation who built the tower of Bavel, for all their failings, had one positive quality. Their unity. Hashem could have merely foiled their plans, but that necessarily would have meant that He would have broken the power of Unity in the Creation.

But Hashem didn’t want to break the power of Unity, because he knew many generations later there would be a Jewish People who would need to receive the Torah, and the only way that they would be able to receive that Torah would be through perfect unity.

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Based on Rashi
Some people weigh the cut hair and give that weight in gold or silver to charity, especially a charity which promotes Torah study.

After everyone gets a snip, the child is usually taken to a barber to finish the job. A man and little boy walk into a barber shop together. “Billy,” says the man, “I’ll get my hair cut first, and then it will be your turn.” The man sits down in the barber’s chair and gets his hair cut.

Then the man stands up, picks up the little boy and sets him down in the barber’s chair. “Make it nice and short,” says the man to the barber. Then to the little boy he says, “Billy, you sit real still while the barber cuts your hair. I’m going next door to the pharmacy for a few minutes.”

When the barber finishes cutting the boy’s hair, he says, “Little boy, shouldn’t your father be back by now?”

“That’s not my father,” says the little boy. “He’s just some nice man who said, ‘Come with me little boy, and we’ll both get a free haircut’.”

Sources:
- Responsa Arugot Habosem
- Meam Lozev on Devarim 11:19
- Sefer Hachinuch LeYisrael page 239
- Sha’arei Teshuvah, Orach Chaim 17:2
- Thanks to Eli Weisstz from Zurich

Answer: A first-born of triplets, born Friday after sunset, whose brothers — born after dark — died due to circumcision. Who am I?

Sources:
- • Responsa Arugot Habosem
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PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 18:1 - The splitting of the sea and the war against Amalek.
2. 18:1 - Reuel, Yeser, Chovev, Chaver, Keni, Putiel.
3. 18:4 - Dasan and Aviram.
4. 18:8 - To induce Yisro to attach himself to the Torah.
5. 18:9 - He grieved.
6. 18:12 - One who dines with Torah scholars.
7. 18:13 - The day after Yom Kippur.
8. 18:13 - A judge who renders a correct decision.
9. 18:14 - Yisro felt that the people weren’t being treated with the proper respect.
10. 18:19 - It spells ‘Hi-malech,’ meaning “Take advice.”
11. 18:27 - To convert the members of his family to Judaism.
13. 19:2 - The Jewish People were united.
14. 19:9 - Hashem offered to appear to Moshe and to give the Torah through him. The Jewish People responded that they wished to learn the Torah directly from Hashem.
15. 20:6 - Five hundred times.
16. 20:13 - Because it’s written immediately after “Don’t murder” and “Don’t commit adultery,” it is derived that “Don’t steal” refers to a crime carrying the same penalty as the first two.

BONUS ANSWER!

Moshe’s level of prophecy was far above that of all other prophets. Because Moshe was totally removed from the physical, Hashem could speak to him ‘face to face.’ The rest of the Jewish People, however, were not on such a high level. They were unable to receive such a clear level of prophecy. In order for them to ‘listen in’ while Hashem appeared to Moshe, the prophecy had to be ‘filtered’ through a ‘thick cloud.’ *Malbim

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