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**How to Perform**

**Chesed Correctly**

**By Daniel Keren**



**Rabbi Fischel Schachter**

 One of the featured speakers at the recent Martin Luther King Birthday legal holiday Hakhel Yarchei Kallah Event was Rabbi Fischel Schachter, internationally renowned Maggid Shiur who addressed the topic “The Seven Rules of Chessed: Essential Guidelines for Life.”

 The Abishter (our Father in heaven) is running the world. All He is asking is that we try to do what we have to do. The story of our lives often revolves around those people who are blocking or disturbing us. That is what the Ribono shel Olam (Master of the World) wants and He desires for us to try to overcome the difficult challenges that those around us pose.

 There has to be an emunah (trust) that the Ribono shel Olam knows where we are going. The people that we deal with are especially sent to us by Hakodesh Baruch Hu (the Holy One blessed be He).

**Opportunities to Perform Chesed**

**For the Enslaved Jews of Egypt**

 In the course of our lives the Abishter gives us the precious opportunities to do chesed. In Mitzrayim (Egypt), the enslaved Jews were allowed a day off from their bondage on Shabbos. They would gather together and talk about the geulah (promised redemption), thereby reinforcing each other.

 Hashem created the world by speaking. And we maintain the world by the way we speak to others, especially with words of chesed (kindness). Rabbi Schachter pointed out that we have to be so careful with the words that we say to others. There was once a man who was suffering so terribly in the concentration camp and he had no will to continue living. Another inmate who had never spoken to this individual before, all of a sudden came up and encouraged him not to give up and that he still had an important purpose in life.

 Those words of chizuk (inspiration) gave the first inmate the will to live and he went on to not only survive the Holocaust and get married but to also strive to have a large family in order to help rebuild the Jewish nation. Thus, before he passed away into the Next World, this survivor had almost one thousand descendants.

**Real Chesed is When Many People**

**Are Not Even Aware of Your Goodness**

 Rabbi Schachter noted that there are those people who often do chesed, but only if other people will notice their acts of kindness and can appreciate his goodness. The real chesed is that which a person does for others when many people are not aware of it. True when it comes to giving tzedakah (charity) one should do it publicly so as to encourage others. But, regarding chesed one should do it quietly.

 One has to do chesed for another based on what that person needs or wants and not what you think that person needs. You have to look upon another person as the Abishter’s bria (creation). Hence if you are helping that person, you are helping the Abishter’s bria or child.

 Rabbi Schachter asked the Hakhel audience, “How do we view people?” All too often it focuses on what we can get from that person instead of how can we help that person. And he concluded his lecture with the promise that our job is to trust Hashem, because in the long run His promises will always come true.

 To view or listen to entire 53-minute lecture you can google: <https://www.torahanytime.com/#/lectures?v=221329>

**Rav Avigdor Miller on a Little**

**Davening with a lot of Thinking**

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**QUESTION: Is it more of a mitzvah to say the whole seder hatefillah every morning or to say part of the davening (prayer servive) and think more into the meaning of what I’m saying?**

**ANSWER:** I won’t tell you my own opinion; I’ll just say what the Tur says: טוב מעט בכוונה מהרבה שלא בכוונה – To say a little bit and to think about what you’re saying is much more valuable than to just speed through the whole davening.
 It’s very important to utilize the opportunity of the tefillah.  The Chovos Halevavos says that the purpose of davening is המחשבה נמשכת אחר הדיבור, that your thoughts should eventually follow your words. And once you accustom yourself to the שירי דוד עבדך, to saying these words of the songs of Dovid Your servant, and reliving a little bit of the great emotions that he expressed in his love of Hashem, then it awakens in us a response and we also gain a little bit of that feeling. And therefore, it’s very important to spend some time doing that during pesukei d’zimra.
Shemona esrei too.

Now, you can’t say the whole shemona esrei with iyun because then it will come time for mincha already and you’re stillstanding shemona esrei. However, if you’ll take every day a little part of shemona esrei and think into it you’ll be surprised what you’ll discover.  It’s like a gold mine.

People don’t realize that the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah who composed the shmona esrei were nevi’im (prophets) and the greatest chachomim (Torah scholars). And they were able to concentrate very deep chochma into these words and therefore you’d be surprised how much you’ll get out of it.

Now, of course sometimes you might imagine wrong peirushim (meaning of the text) but the more you think into it, you’ll see more and more how profound are their words.  And the purpose of davening with kavana after all, is not merely to say the words, but l’hispallel, which means ‘to make yourself think.’ Pillel means ‘to think’ and li’hispallel means ‘to make yourself think.’ And that’s the success that a person gets from proper tefilla. It elevates his mind and brings him to awareness of Hashem and ahavas Hashem.

*Reprinted from the February 1, 2023 email of Toras Avigdor (Tape #950).*

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**And you shall see from among the entire people men of strength, G-d fearing people, men of truth, people who despise money. (18:21)**



**The Noda B’Yehuda, Rabbi Yechezkel Halevi Landau, 1713-1793**

These men were being selected as judges. They were going to receive desk jobs. They were not joining the army and going out to battle. Why did they have to be men of strength? A soldier has to be a strong person. Strong physically as well as strong emotionally. He must be able to control his emotions and feelings. He must not let his feelings of kindness and mercy get the better of him.

These are also the qualifications of a judge. He must not feel sorry for one of the litigants. He must judge the case based on the facts of the case and rule of law, no matter who the litigants are. The judge must be like a soldier. (Noda BYehuda)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Yitro 5783 email of R’ Yedidye Hirtenfeld’s whY I Matter parsha sheet for the Young Israel of Midwood in Brooklyn.*

**The Jew’s Task in Illuminating the Light of Torah to the**

**Rest of the World**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week's Torah reading, Yitro, narrates the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. About this central event in the history of the Jewish people the Torah states, "And G-d spoke all these words, saying." Our commentators ask a logical question: What is the meaning of the seemingly superfluous word "saying"?

Throughout the Torah, wherever the word "saying" appears, the intent is for those words to be transmitted and repeated to those Jews who were not present at the time when G-d uttered them.

However, at the giving of the Torah, every single Jew was present. Everyone was there at Mount Sinai, everyone heard the Ten Commandments - even the souls of Jews yet to be born in future generations were present. Why then, in this instance, does the Torah employ the word "saying"?

The Maggid of Mezeritch, Rabbi Dov Ber, successor of the Baal Shem Tov, answered this question as follows:

"Vayedabeir - And G-d spoke" alludes to the Aseret Hadibrot - the Ten Commandments.

"Leimor - saying" alludes to the Aseret Hama'amarot - the Ten Utterances by which G-d created the world.

The intent of the verse "And G-d spoke all these words, saying" is that the Torah was given for the purpose of drawing down the Ten Commandments into the Ten Utterances of the physical world, i.e., that the light of Torah would illuminate the world to such an extent that it is perceived on the physical plane of existence.

This job was given to the Jewish people when G-d gave them His Torah. Our task as Jews is to cause the light of Torah ("And G-d spoke") to illuminate the world ("saying"). We must never think that the Torah and the world are two separate entities. It isn't enough to conduct ourselves according to Torah when studying and praying. Rather, the light of Torah must be brought down to even our most mundane affairs. Everything a Jew does, no matter how worldly, must be carried out in accordance with the Torah's dictates and performed in a spirit of holiness.

This, then, is the core of the giving of the Torah: bringing the light of Torah, the Ten Commandments - "And G-d spoke" - not only into the realm of Torah, but also into the realm of physical existence, into the world that was created by the Ten Utterances - "saying."

*Reprinted from the Parshat Yisro 5758/1998 edition of L’Chaim (Issue #506) Adapted from Likutei Sichot, Volume 1*

**Thoughts that Count**

*I am the Lord your G-d...You shall have no other gods* (Exod. 20:2-3)

G-d personally said the first two commandments and conveyed the rest through Moses. Though it is incumbent upon every Jew to observe all of the precepts of the Torah, a prophet is permitted to tell a community to temporarily violate a Torah precept. Exempted from this rule is idolatry.

No one has the authority to tell any Jew at any time to transgress this prohibition. The entire Torah was given through Moses, who was the greatest of all the prophets. Since he, as a prophet, was imbued with the power to convey the Torah, G-d vested in Moses and his successors the strength to temporarily supersede a mitzva of the Torah,

However, the first two commandments, which forbid idolatry, were given directly from G-d. Hence, these laws are eternal and totally unchangeable.

(Imrei Rashad)

*Reprinted from Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshas Yitro 5783**



It is well known that there is a difference of opinion as to whether Yitro’s arrival in the camp of Israel in the desert occurred before or after the revelation and granting of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Even if we say that Yitro arrived before the momentous event of Mount Sinai and that the Torah is recording events in a chronological manner, it still is difficult for us to understand.

Why is this most important event in Jewish history as outlined for us in the Torah, be preceded by a rather mundane description of Yitro’s arrival and reception in the camp of Israel? Would it not be more effective to highlight the revelation at Sinai immediately at the beginning of the parsha? And this appears to be especially true since the parsha goes into great detail and some length in describing the circumstances and experience of the revelation at Sinai.

Why is there such an apparent emphasis on Yitro and his arrival? And this question certainly is even more difficult if we adopt the opinion that the revelation at Sinai occurred before the arrival of Yitro. It almost seems that by recording for us the entire story of the arrival of Yitro the Torah somehow diminishes, in emphasis and focus, the narrative regarding the revelation at Sinai itself.

If there ever was a stand-alone event in Jewish and in world history it certainly would be the moment of the revelation and granting of the Torah at Mount Sinai. So, what is the story of Yitro doing being involved in the immortal narrative of the most seminal event in human history?

We are all aware of the great dictum of the Talmud that proper worldly behavior precedes the Torah itself. The order of the subjects in this week's parsha reinforces this idea clearly and cogently. The Torah records for us the politeness, courtesy, respect and sensitivity extended to Yitro by Moshe and Aaron and the Elders of Israel and all of the Jewish people when he arrived in their midst.

The Torah indulges in great detail in describing the reception that Yitro received. Simple courtesy extended to a stranger is the basis of the Jewish value system. It is what separated Abraham from Sodom. The Ten Commandments and in fact the entire Torah itself cannot be understood or appreciated without a grounding in this basic idea of the worth of the human being and of the necessity to honor, welcome and help of one another.

That is why we are not to be murderers, robbers, adulterers, lying witnesses or people of greed and avarice. The Talmud places great emphasis on the small things in life that make for a wholesome society. It records for us in great solemnity that one of the great virtues of the leading scholars of Torah of its day was that they greeted everyone, no matter who that person was, in pleasantness.

This value is emphasized over and over again in the writings of the great men of Israel, throughout the generations. Therefore, the welcome to Yitro must perforce precede the law of the Torah itself for it is the value upon which the Torah itself is based.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of rabbiwein.com*

**You shall not kill (Exod. 20:13)**

When this mitzva of the Ten Commandments is read in private, it is read "lo tirtzach." When the Torah is read in public, the Ashkenazic pronunciation of these words are "lo tirtzawch" (with the Hebrew vowel kametz instead of patach).

These two variant pronunciations teach us that there are two types of murder which are forbidden. The first is the actual shedding of blood. The second is shaming a person in public, which the Talmud equates to murder. *(HaRav Tzirlson M'Kishinev) Reprinted from Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky*

**The Life and Legacy of the RaDak (Rabbi David Kimchi)**

**By Rabbi Nissan Mindel**



Rabbi David Kimchi - RaDaK (4920-4995; 1160-1235) The great grammarian and scholar Rabbi David Kimchi, was a member of a famous family which greatly enriched our Talmudic and Hebrew literature.

It was said of this family, (Where there is no Kemach - flour [bread] there can be no learning [Torah]), "were it not for the Kimchis, there would be no Torah," a saying based on the similarity of the name Kimchi with the Hebrew word Kemach.

**The Cruel Persecution of the Almohades**

Rabbi David Kimchi's father, Rabbi Joseph Ben Isaac Kimchi, lived in Southern Spain. His writings were among the first to introduce the study of Hebrew grammar and culture into Christian Europe. Under the cruel persecution of the Almohades, Rabbi Joseph Kimchi migrated north to Narbonne in France.

The Almohades, a Moorish dynasty in Northern Africa and Southern Spain, came to power in the 12th and 13th centuries. In 1146 they undertook a fanatical fight to enforce the faith of Islam upon all the peoples under their rule. Being fanatical Mohammedans, they destroyed the synagogues and churches, forcing both Jews and Christians either to embrace Islam or to migrate. Maimonides and his family, were among the exiles who fled from Spain about the year 1150.

**The Jews Suffered for an**

**Alleged Theft of Sacred Jewels**

In the year David was born (1160), persecution of the Jews by the Mohammedans increased very considerably. In that year the precious and, to the Moslems, sacred jewels which were kept in the Mohammedan sanctuary at Mecca, were stolen. The Jews were accused of the crime and suffered untold misery for it.

Under these circumstances, Rabbi Joseph Kimchi took his family and went to France. He took with him the great tradition of the Spanish Talmud study, Hebrew language, and Hebrew thought, which had given the Spanish Jewish community the "golden era" for so many years, and set up his new home in Narbonne. When David was about ten years old his father died.

David's older brother Rabbi Moses Kimchi, also a famous scholar, took over the supervision of the upbringing and education of his young brother David. David proved himself a very gifted boy and made great headway in all branches of Jewish knowledge. Soon he became known as one of the greatest scholars of his time by Jews and non-Jews alike. He was given the honorary title of Maestro Petit, which his father had already earned.

**Radak’s Hebrew Grammar Books**

**Influenced Centuries of Non-Jewish Scholars**

For centuries, Rabbi David Kimchi's work in the field of Hebrew grammar was the basis of the study of Hebrew for all non-Jewish scholars. While still young, Rabbi David Kimchi earned his living by teaching the Talmud much in the same way as his father did. Rabbi David Kimchi first became famous by his Michlol ("Completeness"), which is like an encyclopedia of Hebrew grammar.

This grammar had great influence over many Christian Hebraists such as Johann Reuchlin, the great humanitarian and champion of the Talmud in the middle ages. Rabbi David Kimchi wrote a great deal in defense of Judaism against attacks by members of the Christian church. This material was later used extensively by Jewish scholars in disputations with Christians, forced upon them by the Church.

The RaDaK endeared himself to our people by his famous commentary under that name. He wrote commentaries on the Prophets, Psalms, and Chronicles, and also on the Pentateuch, although of the last of these, only the section of Genesis is extant. The RaDaK's commentary enjoyed almost as great popularity as that of Rashi.

Indeed, it is close in nature and style to Rashi's commentaries, for his interpretations are also based on reasoning and grammatical rule, in contrast to the other great Spanish Bible commentator, Nachmanides, who included deeper kabalistic meanings in his commentaries.

The RaDaK's commentaries were greatly esteemed by both Jews and Christians; they were translated into Latin by Christian scholars, and greatly affected later Bible translations, even the most famous one-the King James version. In addition to the Michlol, and his commentary, Rabbi David Kimchi wrote the "Teshuvoth Lanotzrim," (Refutation to the Christians), refuting all attacks by Christian theologians, and "Et Hasofer" (Pen of the Scribe), the latter dealing with the writing of Torah scrolls in accordance with the true traditions of the Massorah.

**Attempted to Defend**

**Maimonides “Moreh Nevuchim”**

Toward the end of his life, Rabbi David Kimchi became involved in one of the most vehement struggles within orthodox Judaism concerning the work of Maimonides, the "Moreh Nevuchim."

Rabbi David Kimchi was a devout admirer of the works of the saintly Rambam, including his philosophical writings. He even undertook a journey to Spain in an attempt to organize the great scholars in defense of Rambam's work. However, on his way he took sick in the small town of Avila, and had to return. Soon after, Rabbi David Kimchi died at the age of seventy-five. (Rabbi Nissan Mindel. Chabad,Org)

*Reprinted from the Parshat Yitro 5783 email of R’ Yedidye Hirtenfeld’s whY I Matter parsha sheet for the Young Israel of Midwood in Brooklyn.*

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**Now I know that G-d is the greatest of all deities (Exod. 18:11)**

To say that G-d is greater than all the other gods is heresy because it implies that other gods have some substance. Why would Yitro say such a thing? This statement is not one of relative comparison, but of total rejection. Yitro was the High Priest of Midian and a very prominent theologian. He was familiar with all of the gods the pagan world worshipped. After learning of the miracles that G-d performed he was convinced of the worthlessness of all the other deities and of G-d's identity as the one and only G-d of the world. Hence he proudly proclaimed, "Now I know that G-d is great, and I have reached this conclusion through realizing the falsehood of all the other gods." *(Alshich) Reprinted from Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky*

**10 Facts About the**

**10 Commandments**

**By Rabbi** [**Menachem Posner**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/12145/jewish/Posner-Menachem.htm)



***Art by***[***Sefira Lightstone***](https://www.chabad.org/3159160)

**1. The 10 Commandments Were Communicated By G‑d at Sinai**

Seven weeks after [G‑d](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/433240/jewish/God.htm) had Moses lead His people out of Egyptian slavery, they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai. The entire nation—men, women, and children—numbering in the millions, heard G‑d’s voice as He communicated this [10-part communique](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2896/jewish/What-Are-the-Ten-Commandments.htm). This moment in time, when heaven kissed earth, is known as *Matan Torah*, “the Giving of the Torah.”

**2. They Are Not “Commandments”**

Scripture1 refers to them as “the 10 sayings” or “things.” This is significant because in the first “saying,” G‑d simply identifies Himself as G‑d who took the people out of Egypt. Is this a commandment? Not necessarily.

**3. G‑d Etched Them on Stone—Twice**

After that momentous meeting, Moses ascended Mount Sinai for 40 days, at the end of which G‑d carved the 10 Commandments onto two tablets of stone. Moses smashed those tablets when he saw the people worshiping the Golden Calf. After two more 40-day stints atop the Mountain, Moses hewed another set of tablets upon which G‑d [once again etched](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/1442959/jewish/Who-Engraved-the-Second-Tablets.htm) the 10 Commandments. These tablets, as well as the broken first set, were stored in the [Ark of the Covenant](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4277479/jewish/The-Ark-of-the-Covenant-Explained.htm), first in the Tabernacle and later the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

**4. They Cover the Gamut of Human Experience**

The 10 Commandments were placed on two stones, five on each. The first five are primarily concerned with our obligation toward G‑d:

I am the L‑rd Your G‑d…

You shall have no other gods…

Do not use G‑d’s name in vain…

Remember the Shabbat day…

Honor your father and mother…

Those on the second stone focus on interpersonal issues:

Do not murder

Do not commit adultery

Do not steal

Do not testify falsely against your fellow

Do not covet…

**5. The Priests Recited Them Daily in the Holy Temple**

In the Holy Temple in [Jerusalem](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4246466/jewish/Jerusalem.htm), before saying Shema in their morning prayers, the priests would recite the 10 Commandments.2 It appears that others outside of the Temple may have wished to do so as well, and the sages discouraged it lest people begin to think that the commandments contained therein are more significant than any of the other mitzvahs of the [Torah](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1426382/jewish/Torah.htm).

**6. There Are 613**[**Mitzvahs**](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1438516/jewish/Mitzvah.htm)

While the 10 Commandments were given with the most fanfare, they are really just a sampling of the 613 commandments G‑d communicated to Moses at Sinai. These 10 things are certainly singled out for being fundamental, and perhaps even sweeping guidelines in which many other commandments are included, but the

others are no less binding.

**7. They Have 620 Letters**

The 10 Commandments are made up of a total of 620 letters. They are said to represent the 613 mitzvot in the Torah and the [7 rabbinic mitzvot](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3495212/jewish/What-Are-the-7-Rabbinic-Mitzvahs.htm). This alludes to the notion that the 10 Commandments are the bedrock upon which the entire Torah is based.

**8. They Are Repeated in Deuteronomy**

The Ten Commandments are recorded twice in the Torah: first in Exodus 20, and once again in [Deuteronomy](https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/8164/jewish/Deuteronomy.htm) 5. The two versions are almost identical, but there are differences, with the version in Deuteronomy being somewhat longer. This is because Deuteronomy is Moses’ retelling of the events that transpired 40 years earlier, with the addition of his insightful commentary.

**9. They Are Read on Shavuot**

The 10 Commandments are read on two Shabbats each year: Yitro—when Exodus 20 is part of the weekly Torah portion, and Va’etchanan—when Deuteronomy 5 is part of the week’s reading. It is also read on [Shavuot](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/111377/jewish/Shavuot.htm), the anniversary of when the 10 Commandments were communicated at Sinai.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, encouraged every single Jewish person, from babies to seniors, to be present at the reading on Shavuot, reliving the original giving of the Torah at Sinai.

**10. A Special Tune Is Used**

When the Ten Commandments are read in the synagogue, they are sung in a tune known as *taam elyon* (“upper inflection”), thus named because the cantillation marks used to guide the reader are found above the words, as opposed to an ordinary *[taam](https://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/1551575/jewish/The-Holy-Palate.htm%22%20%5Co%20%22The%20Holy%20Palate)*, where marks are also found below the text.

**FOOTNOTES**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5805257/jewish/10-Facts-About-the-10-Commandments.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef1a5805257) For example, [Exodus 34:28](https://www.chabad.org/9895#v28).

[2.](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/5805257/jewish/10-Facts-About-the-10-Commandments.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef2a5805257) Mishnah, Tamid 5:1.

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