



# THE CHEVRA

Young Israel of Fair Lawn  
The Morris J. Kraut z'l Torah Center

Joe Smith - President

## Shabbat Parashat Naso 9 Sivan 5767; May 25-26, 2007

The Haftorah is read from Judges 13:2-25.

<b>Friday</b>	
Mincha	7:00 PM
Candle Lighting	7:58 PM

<b>Shabbat</b>	
Chevra Mishnayos Shiur	8:00 AM
Shacharit	9:00 AM
Sof Zman Keriat Shema:	9:11 AM (Gra"h)

<b>Shiur Pirkei Avoth</b>	6:55 PM
Mincha	7:55 PM
Shabbat Ends	9:06 PM

<b>Sunday, Monday</b>	Shacharit	8:30 AM
<b>Tuesday – Friday</b>	Shacharit	7:00 AM

The final time for the sanctification of the New Moon of Sivan is the entire night following Wednesday May 30 (14 Sivan).

### Annual Journal Dinner

Please save the date -  
June 3, 2007 for the YIFL

### Honorees:

#### Baalei Keria:

Aaron Kor, Aaron Safier, Betzalel Bacon, Brad Kaufman, Dovie Fischer, David Gottlieb, David Schwartz, Ephraim Loewy, Evan Silver, Josh Herbert, Leslie Gabor, Covey Schnipper, Phil Kestenbaum, Yechiel Boussi.

#### Awardees:

Rabbi Avidan Elkin – Hakarat Hatov

Jerry Halpern – Talmud Torah  
Joe Smith – Manhig  
Sam Lorber, Paul Cooper – Founders  
Stu Mentzel – Minyonaire

### Torah Insights – Harav Shlomo Riskin

#### Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Naso Numbers 4:21- 7:89

Efrat, Israel – Who was the target audience for the Ten Commandments?

Our Biblical portion this week speaks of the ongoing voice of the Divine, which continues to be heard from within the Sanctuary (Mishkan) on a continual basis after the Divine Revelation, which has just been heard by the entire nation at Sinai. It is clear from the text that G-d will be speaking to Moses – and only to Moses – from between the two cherubs. (Numbers 7:89) The revelations that Moses will receive in the Sanctuary would later be communicated to the rest of Israel in the form of the Pentateuch (and perhaps even major principles of the Oral Law) which we have today. This is in contrast to the Ten Commandments (or at least the first two of the Ten Commandments) which – at least according to the majority of our Biblical commentaries – were initially revealed by G-d to the entire Israelite nation at Sinai (Exodus 20:1). It seems rather obvious that the subsequent Sanctuary revelations were targeted specifically to the Jewish people with the necessity of Moses' serving as intermediary; after all, many if not all of those commandments deal with the activities of the Israelites after they enter the promised Land of Israel. But what of the Ten Commandments? Were they initially meant for Israel – or, perhaps,

were they, and are they, really meant for the entire world, for all of humanity?

The Midrash certainly seems to think that G-d initially was desirous of making His revelation a universal one, directed at all of civilization. In Moses' farewell message to the Israelites at the conclusion of his earthly life (and at the conclusion of the Pentateuch), he declares: "The Lord came from Sinai and above from Seir to them; He appeared from Mt. Paran...." (Deut 33:2). Rashi (ad loc) cites the Midrash, "He began with the children of Seir (Edom or Esau, and, in the Midrashic tradition, the progenitor of Rome and Christianity), offering that they accept the Torah (of the Decalogue), but they did not desire it, he then went on and offered it to the children of Ishmael (Midrashically, the Arab Moslem world), but they did not want it..." the famous Midrash goes on to describe how the entire world was not yet ready to accept the moral strictness and limitations of "Thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery," whereas the Israelites declared, "We shall carry out (initially) and (only later attempt to) understand" the laws of the Decalogue, but we now accept them "wholesale" and in their entirety (Exodus 24:7). But in the first instance, according to the Midrash, G-d intended the Ten Commandments for everyone! It is also fascinating to note that even within the Biblical text itself the all-inclusive nature of G-d's revelation seems evident; the introductory verse of the Decalogue reads "And G-d spoke all these words saying..." without any specific object or nation He was addressing (Exodus 20:1), whereas the very previous verse states, "And Moses descended to the nation and spoke to them..." (Ex 19:25). Moses' audience may have

been Israel, but G-d's audience was – and is – the world!

And indeed each of the laws of the Decalogue are universally relevant and even critical for the preservation of humanity. The introductory statement, "I am the Lord your G-d who took you out of the Land of Egypt, the house of bondage" refers not only to G-d's concern that Israel be free but also to G-d's concern that every human being – created in the Divine image be free; had G-d only been parochially concerned for the Israelites, He could have air-lifted them out of Egypt as we Israelis airlifted the Beta Yisrael Jewish community out of Ethiopia in Operations Moses and Solomon, and there would have been no necessity for all the ten plagues and the splitting of the Reed Sea. These miracles clearly meant to teach Pharaoh – and all would-be totalitarian, enslaving despots of the future – that G-d demands freedom for each of His children; this lesson was meant to be learned by the entire world, so that the Israelites could justifiably sing at the Reed Sea: "The Nations heard and they became terrified, trembling grabbed hold of the inhabitants of Philistia; the generals of Edom were frightened... all inhabitants of Canaan melted... The Lord (and not any Pharaoh) shall reign forever and ever" (Exodus 15:14-18).

The next two actual commandments prohibit idolatry, which is similarly prohibited by the seven Noahide laws of morality. I strongly subscribe to Rabbi Menahem Meiri's definition of idolatry, which has nothing to do with theology and everything to do with the ethically and morally repugnant sexual orgiastic excesses and child sacrifice – murders associated with idolatry (see Moshe Halbertal's important book, *Idolatry*). The third commandment prohibiting the taking of the Lord's name in vain (or to further falsehood or trickery) parallels the Noahide prohibition of blaspheming G-d; note that nowhere is belief in G-d explicitly mentioned as either one of the Noahide laws or one of the Ten Commandments. This is reminiscent of the trenchant midrashic comment, "Would that you forget Me, says G-d, but remember My laws of morality,"

The fifth commandment deals with respecting parents – who give life and

usually sustaining nurture – with the final five forbidding murder, adultery, theft, false testimony and coveting that which does not belong to you. All of these are certainly universal in import and attribution.

The only commandment which may be seen as referring only to the Israelites is the fourth, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy... The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your G-d; you shall not do any creative physical activity, neither you nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your Gentile manservant nor your Gentile maid-servant, nor your animal, nor the stranger who is within your gates" (Exodus 20:8-10). Here, too, the work prohibition includes the stranger, the Gentile and even the animal, with the very next verse stressing the most universal of reasons for this Sabbath law: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and everything which is in them, and He rested on the seventh day" (20:11). Apparently the message of the Sabbath is that there is only one Creator, everyone and everything else is a creature, and so the Sabbath work prohibition comes to remind us to value every Divine creation and for one human being never to "lord" over any other human being – who is a creature just like he is a creature. All humans must together and separately only serve the single and singular Lord of the Universe. This idea is strengthened in second version of the Decalogue in the Book of Deuteronomy which stresses the reason for the Sabbath as being "in order that your male servant and your female servant may rest like you" (Dt. 5:14).

Although it is true that our Sabbath Amidah specifies the fact of the Sabbath as a sign between G-d and Israel forever, a day which G-d "did not give to the Gentiles of the earth but (only) to Israel did He give it with love," this may either refer to the fact that the Gentiles chose not to take it, or that the details of our Sabbath laws and the all-encompassing Divine Service which defines Jewish Sabbath observance does not apply to the Gentile world. But the ever-arching notion of a general day of rest for all creatures under the one Creator may well be necessary and crucial for Gentile as well as Jew.

In any event, the Ten Commandments is probably Judaism's greatest gift to the world, and our best chance at world peace were they ever to be universally adopted. And the fact that we read the Book of the convert Ruth on the Festival commemorating the Revelation at Sinai, is the best proof of the universal import of that revelation!

#### POSTSCRIPT:

Having said this, I would still argue that there can be no more meaningful ritual for the world to adopt than our Jewish Sabbath day: what can provide greater familial cohesiveness than a Friday evening song – feast around the table, replete with a song of peace, a poem of praise to wife and mother, and parents blessing their children? How personally refreshing and revitalizing it is for every individual to have one day free from work-place pressure, one day without car and traffic, set aside for family, community, individual meditation and introspection – or just catch-up time? And how liberating it would be to have one day without telephone, cell-phone or SMS, one day in which you set the agenda rather than have a caller or e-mailer set the agenda for you! In my life the telephone is much more of a nuisance interloper and disturber than a mechanical aid and enabler.

#### By Shlomo Riskin Shabbat Shalom

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