



CANDLE LIGHTING 5:35 PM | 18 ADAR | MARCH 7, 2026 | HAVDALA 6:39 PM

שבת פרשת כי תשא/פרשת פרה
SHABBAT PARSHAT KI TISAH
PARSHAT PARAH

Two Sifrei Torah. Maftir reads from Chukat (Numbers 19:1-22). Haftorah is Ezekiel 36:16-38. Do not say אב הרחמים. We do say צדקתך צדק at Mincha.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA 5:40 PM

SHKIA 5:53 PM

TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM 6:33 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA 7:45 AM

SHACHARIT - MAIN 9:00 AM

POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR HIATUS

LAST KRIAT SHEMA 9:14 AM

FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR ≈11:30 AM

PRE-MINCHA SHIUR 4:45 PM

MINCHA 5:25 PM

SHKIA 5:54 PM

MAARIV 6:39 PM

FRIDAY NIGHT SHABBAT DINNER

Thank you Liz Jacob and Evi Dworkis for making the Friday night dinner happen.

MARCH BIRTHDAY/ ANNIVERSARY KIDDUSH

Kiddush is sponsored to celebrate our March birthdays and anniversaries!

Happy birthday to - Yali Agress, Sara Bernstein, Noah Goldberg, Yitzy Deer Goldberg, Alison Gordon, Elliot Greene, Ami Herman, Melanie Kwestel, Gabriel Mihailevsky, Lana Mihailevsky, Sara Molinsky, Lev Norton, Nava Shestack, Idan Sufian, and Shelly Winchester. **Happy anniversary to** - Bronia & Josh Agress, Alison & Akiva Gordon, and Miriam & Adam Nudelman



BOARD GAME NIGHT

The Board Game night is this Saturday night, 8:15 PM Thank you Erica & Benji Cooper for making it happen.

BLOOD DRIVE

The blood drive is this Sunday, 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Sign up for the Blood Drive here: [Blood is Needed!](#)

TODAH RABAH

Thank you to Rebecca Berger and Shelly Winchester for arranging the shul mishloach manot and to all those who packed and delivered it!

MAZEL TOV!

Mazal tov to Joan & Barry Goldberg on the birth of their granddaughter Rivka to Leah & Avraham Brez (and to the Santacruz family on their niece/cousin). יגדלוה לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים May they raise her to Torah, chuppah and good deeds.



MAZEL TOV

Mazel tov to Gail & Steven Plotnick on the birth of a grandson to Madeline & Josh Simanowitz. יגדלוה לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים ויכניסוהו לביתנו בזמנו ובעתו May they raise him to Torah, chuppah and good deeds, and may he be entered into the covenant of Abraham.



EMATAI - IN ONE WEEK

Navigating Advance Halachic Healthcare Directives, March 15 at Noon, with Bassie Taubes, RN. RSVP: [Health](#).

 ORTHODOX UNION תאחדות אגודות ישראל Enhancing Jewish Life	SUNDAY 3/8	MONDAY 3/9	TUESDAY 3/10	WEDNESDAY 3/11	THURSDAY 3/12	FRIDAY 3/13
WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM						
SHACHARIT	8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM
2ND SHACHARIT MINYON - YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM		7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	6:44 PM	6:45 PM	6:46 PM	6:47 PM	6:48 PM	6:45 PM
ZMANIM						
Earliest Talit	6:25 AM	6:24 AM	6:22 AM	6:21 AM	6:19 AM	6:17 AM
Gedolah	1:36 PM	1:36 PM	1:36 PM	1:36 PM	1:36 PM	1:36 PM
Shkia	6:56 PM	6:57 PM	6:58 PM	6:59 PM	7:00 PM	
Tzait	7:36 PM	7:37 PM	7:38 PM	7:39 PM	7:40 PM	

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mar 7 -Board Games Night, 8:15 PM: Games

Mar. 8 - Blood Drive. Sign up here: [BLOOD](#).

Mar. 15 - "What's the Plan? Navigating Advance Halachic Healthcare Directives & Meaningful Family Conversations," with Bassie Taubes, RN, Director of Community Outreach, Ematai, discussing advance planning, healthcare goals and values. RSVP: [Health](#).

Mar. 28 - Pre-Pesach Luncheon. RSVP here: [Lunch](#).

Mar. 28 - Shir HaShirim Chapter-by-Chapter Round-Robin Sign up here: [Song of Songs](#).

Apr. 25 - Rabbi Binny Freedman SIR.

IN OUR FUTURE - KIDDUSH, SEUDAH SHLISHIT, & ETC.

Apr. 25 - Birthday and Anniversary Kiddush

June 20 - Kiddush is sponsored by Shelly & Steve Winchester celebrating Daniel's Auf Ruf and upcoming wedding to Yael Simons.

- Enjoying Scotch at Kiddush, please donate a bottle from time to time.
- To sponsor a Kiddush (prices start at \$318, plus a bottle of scotch) email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.
- Want to know the menu for Kiddush? Email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com to be put on the WhatsApp group. To sponsor Seudah Shlishit for \$136 (or in the case of multiple sponsors, \$100 per sponsor), email dmgarfunkel@gmail.com.

BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY KIDDUSH

To add a birthday or anniversary to our April list (next Kiddush on Shabbat, April 25), click here: [SIMCHA](#). Listings/sponsorships are \$36 per family per month. RSVP for the April birthday/anniversary Kiddush by Sunday night, April 19.

SHIURIM



- PESHAT OF THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM (<https://zoom.us/j/7291311899>, PW: 112233).
- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via a Whatsapp group, with 3-minute daily Halacha insights. To join email Rabbi Shestack at rabbishestack@gmail.com. 
- TORAH PODCAST FOR YOUR COMMUTE is available on Spotify or on other applications with an RSS code. Click here: [PODCASTS](#).
- POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR, alternates between examining the development of Halachot and analyzing Mishlei (Proverbs)
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush.
- SHABBAT SHIUR, **Sanhedrin Ch. 8**, 40 minutes prior to mincha.
- TZURBA M'RABANAN w/ Zack Doberman, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM. In-person at the shul and via Zoom.
- HALACHA SHIUR FOR WOMEN, Monday nights, 8:15 PM on Zoom - **Studying Borer**.
- SEDER ON THE SIDDUR, at Seudah Shlishit - **KADDISH 4 - R. DONIN PP. 220-221, ARTSCROLL'S KADDISH PP. 50-55.**

BOARD MEETINGS 8:15 PM

Mar. 24 - At shul w/Zoom option.

Apr. 28, May 26, & June 30

GITA COOPERWASSER ה"י YOUTH EVENTS

May 23 - Interactive Youth Shavuot program with dinner.

GITA COOPERWASSER ה"י SHABBAT YOUTH INFO



- **SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS:**
3RD - 5TH: ISABELLA & LETIZIA
K - 2ND: ABBY, ZOE, & BELANA
3 YRS - PRE-K: ARNELLA & DANIELLE
- Youth group for in 2nd - 5th Graders starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on left on entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 4 years old through 1st Grade starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me, 9:00 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for prizes.
- Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 5th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestack, with special snacks, tickets and more.

18-25 Saddle River Road
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
201.797.0502

<http://www.ahavatachim.org>



Sunday, March 8th
**BE A BLOOD
 DONOR!**

Sign up
 HERE



**YOUR BLOOD IS WORTH
 MORE THAN GOLD!**

Come donate blood with the
 Ahavat Achim community



DAVID SCHWITZER ^{ד"ר} **SOCIAL HALL**

Contact Lori at garfmom@gmail.com to book the David Schwitzer ^{ד"ר} Social Hall for an event or occasion. \$250 (members), \$325 (Associates), or \$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of clean up (and a \$150 refundable security/cleaning deposit). Private caterers must be approved by the Rabbi.

CHESED TEAM

If you or someone you know needs assistance, email us at chesed@ahavatachim.org.

Yahrzeit Plaques

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque, \$300 for members/\$450 for nonmembers. We will strive to send you written notice of upcoming yahrzeit and announce name during public Yizkor. Email Amy at yahrzeit@ahavatachim.org to arrange.

DONATE A SEFER, ETC.

Donate Siddurim & Machzorim (\$40), and Chumashim (\$60). Contact David at dmgarfunkel@gmail.com for details.

MISHEBAYRACH

For a Mishebayrach pledge to give Tzedakah on behalf of those for whom you asked Hashem's blessing, contributions to the shul can be made using Paypal's Giving Fund (with 100% of the proceeds going to the Shul), by clicking here: [Ahavat Achim Donations](#). If by check, please indicate on its face "Aliyah Donation."

HONORARIA

The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at seplotnick@gmail.com.

SINGLES SHIDDUCH GROUP

Reach out to Rabbi Shestack or Sara Levine (saralevine06@gmail.com) if interested.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships opportunities for Yahrzeits, Refuahs, and Hodahs (thanks), are available for regular shiurim, youth events and similar activities (but not for established honorariums or sponsorship funded events). Cost of sponsorship (shiur or youth event) is \$100 per sponsor. Multiple sponsors for an event will be accepted. Sponsorships will be listed in the bulletin and announced at the event (and, if possible, a placard with the sponsorship will be prepared and displayed at the event).

Sponsorships do not include any extra amenities (such as food). Please contact Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

MEN'S CLUB

Email MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org to join the Men's Club.

From The OU.ORG Four Shabbatot, adapted from The Book of Our Heritage by Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, and other sources.

PARSHAT PARAH

"This is the decree of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel, and they shall take to you a completely red cow, which is without blemish, and upon which a yoke has not come." (BaMidbar 19:2) This is an example of Law of the Torah which is considered completely above human comprehension. The paradox is that those who are involved in the preparation of the ashes of the cow become ritually impure, while the sprinkling of water with those ashes is used to remove contamination! It is an example of a Law which must be accepted on faith alone.

On the Shabbat after Purim (most years), two Torah Scrolls are removed from the Ark. The weekly Sidrah is read from the first, and from the second, the chapter of Parah Adumah, the Red Cow (or Red Heifer). It gives the procedure through which people can purify themselves from the contamination caused by a human corpse.

The reading of this chapter was instituted for this time of the year because Jews were required to purify themselves before coming to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage festival of Passover. The Haftarah read on Shabbat of Parashat Parah contains the verse, "And I shall sprinkle pure water upon you, that you be cleansed. From all your contamination and from all your filth I will cleanse you" (Ezekiel 36:25). Another parallel in the Haftarah are the concepts of sin represented by contamination and atonement represented by purity.

This is discussed the ArtScroll Ezekiel commentary (pp. 534-5), as follows: Freedom of will in moral matters is the first and irreplaceable condition for living one's life on the higher plane demanded by the Torah. Belief in man's freedom of action, however, is endangered by the fact that man cannot avoid death and that he is subject to the superficial limitations imposed by the forces of nature. This belief is particularly shaken by the sight of a dead human being. If the whole human being has succumbed to death, been overpowered by physical forces - If man, like all other organic beings, cannot escape the spell of an overpowering force - then there is no room for the moral "you shall" next to the physical "you must." Moral freedom of will would then be an illusion, and the Divine law of morality with its demand for total free-willed devotion to the illuminating, purifying fire of its sanctuary would be incomprehensible. (R'Hirsch, Numbers 19:22).

Thus, sin is related not only to death, but also to contamination, which is closely associated with death. Because the sinner is shackled by his desires, he loses spiritual control of actions. He is swept along by the physical lusts that have overpowered his spiritual self. Thus, the most meaningful part of life, the spiritual, has been killed. For this reason, when G-d forgives man's sin and grants him a new heart and a new spirit, He is imbuing him with purity, the state of mind in which man is the sole master of his actions.

A living (and therefore a pure) person uses his body as he wills; it is his tool to use as he sees fit. The regenerate sinner, upon returning to the state of purity, joins once more the state of the living - and the free. (Chazon HaMikra) As with the other of the Four Parshiyot, a boy who is not yet of Bar-Mitzvah age should not be called to the Torah for Maftir on Shabbat Parshat Parah, nor should he read the Parshah for others. For since he is free of the obligation of Mitzvot, he cannot enable others to fulfill their obligation through him.

AHAVAT ACHIM MEMBERSHIP/ HOSPITALITY

Email Sara at membership@ahavatachim.org for membership details or Shabbat hospitality.

PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births and weddings of children/grandchildren, bar/bat mitzvahs of children, deaths requiring shiva observance, as well as travel to/from Israel to study). Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication (\$36 cost - \$54 with photo).

NUMBERS & INFO

ERUV: To subscribe for updates, email fairlawneruv@groups.io. Check status at <https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv> or call 201-254-9190.

MIKVAH: 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah. Go to <http://www.fairlawnmikvah.org/> for online booking.

TWITTER: AhavatAchimFL

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091322384429

INSTAGRAM: www.instagram.com/ahavatachim/

FLICKR: flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums

BULLETIN DEDICATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHUL CALENDAR

Email seplotnick@gmail.com for an announcement of a simcha, refuah or life cycle event in the bulletin or to dedicate a bulletin for \$36 (\$54 w/Photo).

COMMUNITY SECURITY



To become part of our community security service, email Margo at security@ahavatachim.org.

HOW TO DONATE TO THE SHUL USING PAYPAL

Please do not simply pay the shul using PayPal, as that incurs a 3% service charge that will get charged to the shul. Instead, please use our fee-free dedicated PayPal link <http://paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1444321>. PayPal will email you a receipt for your charitable donation and the shul will receive 100% of your donation. [Make sure you click the "SHARE MY NAME" box so the shul will know who paid so that we can credit your account.]





AHAVAT ACHIM
— קהלת אהבת אחים —
THE FAMILY SHUL

March

Simcha Kiddush

Honorees

Birthdays



Yali Agress
Sara Bernstein
Yitzy Deer Goldberg
Alison Gordon
Elliot Greene
Noah Goldberg
Ami Herman

Melanie Kwestel
Gabriel Mihailevsky
Lana Mihailevsky
Lev Norton
Nava Shestack
Sara Molinsky
Idan Sufian

Shelly Winchester

Anniversaries

Bronia and Josh Agress
Miriam and Adam Nudelman
Alison and Akiva Gordon



AHAVAT ACHIM

קהלת אהבת אחים

THE FAMILY SHUL

RSVP BY 3/2!

LAST HOUR FRIDAY NIGHT SHABBAT DINNER

NOT READY FOR THE CLOCKS TO CHANGE? JOIN US FOR ONE LAST COMMUNITY FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER BEFORE WE SPRING FORWARD AN HOUR!

FRIDAY, MARCH 6 FOLLOWING DAVENING

(~6:30PM)

Early Bird Pricing before 2/20:

ADULTS (12 YEARS OLD +) - \$25

CHILDREN AGES 6 - 11 - \$10

CHILDREN AGES 3 - 5 - \$3

FAMILY MAX - \$70

Pricing after 2/20:

ADULTS (12 YEARS OLD +) - \$30

CHILDREN AGES 6 - 11 - \$13

CHILDREN AGES 3 - 5 - \$5

FAMILY MAX - \$85



[TINYURL.COM/AALASTHOUR](https://tinyurl.com/aalasthour)



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים
THE FAMILY SHUL



Board Game Night

FOR
ADULTS!



WITH PIZZA & BEER

**SATURDAY
MARCH 7**

8:15 PM

\$10 per person

RSVP by 3/4

Bring your competitive spirit
(and your favorite board games!)
for a night of gaming and fun



RSVP at:

<https://tinyurl.com/AAGameNight>

events@ahavatachim.org

Sunday, March 8th

BE A BLOOD DONOR!

Sign up
HERE



**YOUR BLOOD IS WORTH
MORE THAN GOLD!**

Come donate blood with the
Ahavat Achim community



What's the Plan?

Navigating Advance Halachic Healthcare Directives & Meaningful Family Conversations

Congregation Ahavat Achim and Ematai
invite you to join

Bassie Taubes, RN

Director of Community Outreach, Ematai

for a discussion about advance planning, healthcare goals and values,
and how to have this important discussion with friends and family



Sunday, March 15th

8PM

Congregation Ahavat Achim

18-25 Saddle River Rd, Fairlawn

RSVP: tinyurl.com/EmataiWorkshop

A guide to starting important
conversations with your family

Designate your healthcare
proxy and rabbinic consultant

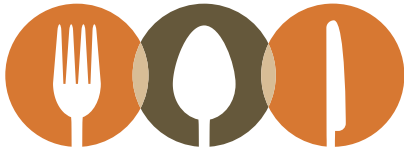
Communicate your healthcare
preferences and Jewish values

Endorsed by leading poskim,
doctors, and attorneys

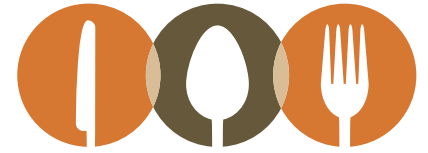


REALTIME CONSULT HELPLINE:
+1-646-599-3895

 **ematai.org**



AHAVAT ACHIM
 קהלת אהבת אחים
 THE FAMILY SHUL



**CABINETS BARE BEFORE PESACH?
 JOIN US FOR ONE LAST KIDDUSH!**

PRE-PESACH COMMUNITY LUNCHEON

**IT'LL BE
 CHAMETZ-ING!**

SATURDAY, MARCH 28

SIGN UP TO SPONSOR OR VOLUNTEER TO
 MAKE A CROCKPOT DISH!

SPONSORSHIPS:

KADESH: \$54

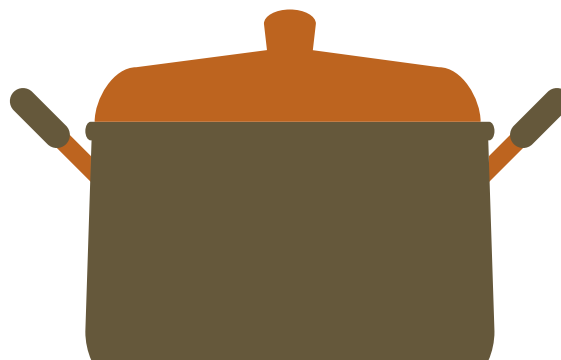
KARPAS: \$72

MAGGID: \$118

TZAFUN: \$180

SIGN UP BY 3/24!

TINYURL.COM/AAPRE-PESACH





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AHAVAT ACHIM

PRESENTS A SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE SHABBATON WITH

RABBI BINNY FREEDMAN

SAVE THE DATE

**SHABBAT PARASHAT
ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM
APRIL 24–25, 2026**



Rabbi Binny Freedman is Rosh Yeshiva, founder, and Dean of Yeshivat Orayta. He is a highly engaging and inspiring educator who has the gift for synthesizing difficult, sophisticated material in a way that inspires both the novice and the scholar. His proficiency in applying Jewish concepts to contemporary life in a personal and meaningful manner has made him a sought-after speaker and educator around the world. Rav Binny is an IDF Company Commander who came to Israel as a lone soldier in 1982.

Israel360 reflects Israel's international reach and Mizrachi's mission of spreading Torat Eretz Yisrael across the world. To celebrate Israel during the month of Iyar, Mizrachi brings inspiring Israeli speakers and thinkers to 360 communities all around the globe. www.mizrachi.org/israel360



Covenant & Conversation

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

KI TISSA • כִּי תִּטָּא

FROM THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ז"ל

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel. "I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah. An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives." — Rabbi Sacks

This year's series of essays were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks ז"ל in 5773 (2012–2013). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) created to inspire intergenerational learning on the Parsha.

Two Types of Religious Encounter

Framing the epic events of this week's sedra are two objects – the two sets of Tablets, the first given before, the second after, the sin of the Golden Calf. Of the first, we read:

The Tablets were the work of God, and the writing was God's writing, engraved on the Tablets.

Ex. 32:16

These were perhaps the holiest objects in history: from beginning to end, the work of God. Yet within hours they lay shattered, broken by Moses when he saw the Calf, and the Israelites dancing around it.

The second Tablets, brought down by Moses on the tenth of Tishri, were the result of his prolonged plea to God to forgive the people. This is the historic event that lies behind Yom Kippur (which falls each year on the tenth of Tishri), the day marked in perpetuity as a time of favour, forgiveness, and reconciliation between God and the Jewish people. The

second Tablets were different from the first in one respect. They were not wholly the work of God:

“Carve two Tablets of stone like the first, and I will inscribe on them the Words that were on the first Tablets that you broke.”

Ex. 34:1

Hence the paradox: the first Tablets, made by God, did not remain intact. The second Tablets, the joint work of God and Moses, did. Surely the opposite should have been true: the greater the holiness, the more eternal. Why was the more holy object broken while the less holy stayed whole? This is not, as it might seem, a question specific to the Tablets. It is, in fact, a powerful example of a fundamental principle in Jewish spirituality.

The Jewish mystics distinguished between two types of Divine-human encounter. They called them *itaruta de-l'eylah* and *itaruta deletata*, respectively “an awakening from above” and “an

awakening from below.” The first is initiated by God, the second by humankind. An “awakening from above” is spectacular, supernatural, an event that bursts through the chains of causality that at other times bind the natural world. An “awakening from below” has no such grandeur. It is a gesture that is human, all too human.

Yet there is another difference between them, in the opposite direction. An “awakening from above” may change nature, but it does not, in and of itself, change human nature. In it, no human effort has been expended. Those to whom it happens are passive. While it lasts, it is overwhelming; but only while it lasts. Thereafter, people revert to what they were. An “awakening from below”, by contrast, leaves a permanent mark.

Because human beings have taken the initiative, something in them changes. Their horizons of possibility have been expanded. They now know they are capable of great things, and because they did so once, they are aware that they can do so again. An awakening from above temporarily transforms the external world; an awakening from below permanently transforms our internal world. The first changes the universe; the second changes us.

Two examples. The first: Before and after the division of the Red Sea, the Israelites were confronted by enemies: before, by the Egyptians, after by the Amalekites. The difference is total.

Before the Red Sea, the Israelites were commanded to do nothing:

“Fear not. Stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will bring you

today. The Egyptians you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you. You stay silent.”

Shemot 14:13-14

Facing the Amalekites, however, the Israelites themselves had to fight:

Moses said to Joshua, “Choose men for us, and go out and do battle with the Amalekites.”

Shemot 17:9

The first was an “awakening from above”, the second an “awakening from below.” The difference was palpable. Within three days after the division of the Sea, the greatest of all miracles, the Israelites began complaining again (no water, no food). But after the war against the Amalekites, the Israelites never again complained when facing conflict (the sole exception – when the spies returned and the people lost heart – was when they relied on hearsay testimony, not on the immediate prospect of battle itself). The battles fought for us do not change us; the battles we fight, do.

The second example: Mount Sinai and the Tabernacle. The Torah speaks about these two revelations of “God’s glory” in almost identical terms:

The glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the Cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day, He called to Moses from within the Cloud.

Ex. 24:16

Then the Cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.

Ex. 40:34

The difference between them was that the sanctity of Mount Sinai was momentary, while that of the Tabernacle was permanent (at least, until the Temple was built, centuries later).

The revelation at Sinai was an “awakening from above”. It was initiated by God. So overwhelming was it that the people said to Moses, “*Let not God say any more to us, or we will die*” (Ex. 20:16). By contrast, the Tabernacle involved human labour. The Israelites made it; they prepared the structured space the Divine Presence would eventually fill. Forty days after the revelation at Sinai, the Israelites made a Golden Calf. But after constructing the Sanctuary they made no more idols – at least until they entered the land. That is the difference between the things that are done for us and the things we have a share in doing ourselves. The former change us for a moment, the latter for a lifetime.

There is one further difference between the first Tablets and the second. According to tradition, when Moses was given the first Tablets, he was given only *Torah shebichtav*, the “Written Torah”. At the time of the second Tablets, he was given *Torah she-be’al peh*, the Oral Torah as well:

R. Jochanan said: God made a covenant with Israel only for the sake of the Oral Law, as it says: “... *for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel*” (Ex. 34:27).

The difference between the Written and Oral Torah is profound. The first is the word of God, with no human contribution. The second is a partnership – the word of God as interpreted by the mind of man.

The following are two of several remarkable passages to this effect:

R. Judah said in the name of Shmuel: Three thousand traditional laws were forgotten during the period of mourning for Moses. They said to Joshua: “Ask” (through *ruach hakodesh*, the Holy Spirit). Joshua replied, “It is not in heaven.” They said to Samuel, “Ask.” He replied, “These are the commandments,” implying that no prophet has the right to introduce anything new. (B.T. Temurah 16a) “If a thousand prophets of the stature of Elijah and Elisha were to give one interpretation of a verse, and one thousand-and-one Sages were to offer a different interpretation, we follow the majority: the law is in accordance with the thousand-and-one Sages and not in accordance with the thousand prophets.”

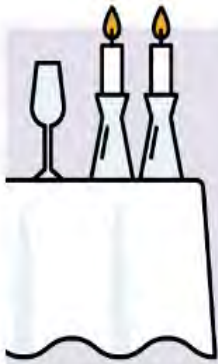
Maimonides, Commentary to the Mishneh, Introduction

Any attempt to reduce the Oral Torah to the Written – by relying on prophecy or Divine communication – mistakes its essential nature as the collaborative partnership between God and man, where revelation meets interpretation. Thus, the difference between the two precisely mirrors that between the first and second Tablets. The first were Divine, the second the result of Divine-human collaboration. This helps us understand a glorious ambiguity. The Torah says that at Sinai the Israelites heard a “great voice *velo yasaf*” (Deut. 5:18). Two contradictory interpretations are given of this phrase. One reads it as “a great voice that was

never heard again”, the other as “a great voice that did not cease” – i.e. a voice that was always heard again. Both are true. The first refers to the Written Torah, given once and never to be repeated. The second applies to the Oral Torah, whose study has never ceased.

It also helps us understand why it was only after the second Tablets, not the first, that “when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two Tablets of Testimony in his hand, he was unaware that the skin of his face shone with light because he had been speaking with God” (Shemot 34:29). Receiving the first Tablets, Moses was passive. Therefore, nothing in him changed. For the second, he was active. He had a share in the making. He carved the stone on which the words were to be engraved. That is why he became a different person. His face shone.

In Judaism, the natural is greater than the supernatural in the sense that an “awakening from below” is more powerful in transforming us, and longer lasting in its effects, than is an “awakening from above.” That was why the second Tablets survived intact while the first did not. Divine intervention changes nature, but it is human initiative – our approach to God – that changes us.



Around the Shabbat Table

1. Why are the things we participate in creating often more enduring than those simply received?
2. Which has a stronger impact on you: sudden inspiration, or a change you work hard to achieve?
3. The Oral Torah is an example of partnership with God. How does interpreting and debating God's law change our relationship with Him?

● These questions come from this week's **Family Edition** to Rabbi Sacks' Covenant & Conversation. For an interactive, multi-generational study, check out the full edition at <https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-family-edition/ki-tissa/two-types-of-religious-encounter/>