



MEYACHED AND ME'ACHED: THE UNIQUE AND UNIFYING EFFECT OF REVELATION

Revelation at Sinai not only changed the course of history — it transformed our very idea of self.

The Talmud teaches us that the amora Rav Yosef would only eat the finest meats on Shavuot, taking special care in celebrating this holiday (*Pesachim* 68b):

רב יוסף ביומא דעצרתא אמר: עבדי לי עגלא תלתא. אמר, אי לא האי יומא דקא גרים כמה יוסף איכא בשוקא.

Rav Yosef, on the day of Shavuot, would say: Prepare me a third-born calf. He said: Were it not for the impact of this day, how many Yosefs would there be in the market?

What exactly does Yosef mean? Why would there be many Yosefs in the marketplace if not for the holiday of Shavuot?

Rashi explains Rav Yosef’s remarks as a reflection on the transformative nature of Torah. Without Torah, Rav Yosef says, I would be like anyone else in the marketplace. It is Torah, according to Rashi, that made Rav Yosef unique.

If Torat Emet is seen as a conduit for Torat Chaim, then our sense of self becomes unified and whole.

I once heard a second approach to understanding this teaching from my friend and psychoanalyst Dr. Daniel Rothenberg. He explained that this Gemara is teaching us a very

important lesson on how one views their life. Each of us have myriad responsibilities — in our homes, our synagogues, our communal lives and our professional lives. We all have multiple character traits and many different identities. And without a clear purpose, our very notion of self is challenged. Am I a professional or a spouse or a parent or a student or a teacher or a leader or a follower? As we step into different environments, we assume different roles. A master of the board room might be a simple parishioner in shul and an emotional teddy bear at home.

What is the connective tissue that holds all these identities into one person?

In *Pachad Yitzchak*, in the 94th letter of his collected correspondence, Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner relates that he

was once asked advice by a student who felt he was living a double existence — one in the workplace, which was filled with secular accomplishments, and the other at home, which was filled with Torah. He felt like a fraud, and he turned to his teacher for guidance. Rav Hutner answered that someone who has two houses with two wives and two families is living a double life, but one who has multiple rooms in the same house is not leading a double life, but a unified life with multiple facets. Rav Hutner's point is that we must contextualize our entire lives as *avodat Hashem* — heavenly service.

In all aspects. If Torah is understood as not just what we study but how we live, if Torat Emet is seen as a conduit for Torat Chaim, then our sense of self becomes unified and whole.

And this is the benefit of the Torah that Rav Yosef celebrated on Shavuot. Were it not for Shavuot, he explained, there would be many Rav Yosefs in the marketplace. Rav Yosef was imagining a life driven without a cohesive, elevated purpose. And without a purpose we are scattered — there are many of us and many Rav Yosefs. Without Torah there could be several Rav Yosefs depending on the environment. With Torah, with a

purpose, there is one Rav Yosef.

Torah according to both Rashi's interpretation and this approach accomplishes a dual mission: it distinguishes us, and it unifies us. It is both *meyached* and *me'ached*.

As the world becomes more connected and globalized, it is easier than ever to feel untethered, without a cohesive self. Work creeps into our home life and our home life beckons us during our work life. And that is why we need to celebrate a purpose-driven life like Rav Yosef. Without revelation, we are scattered, but with Torah we can all be one.

CORE TORAH VALUES

Yeshiva University is a unique ecosystem of educational institutions and resources that prepares the next generation of leaders with Jewish values and market-ready skills to achieve great success in their personal and professional lives, endowing them with both the will and wherewithal to transform the Jewish world and broader society for the better.

TORAT EMET
אמת
TRUTH

We believe in truth, and humanity's ability to discover it.

The pursuit of truth has always been the driving force behind advances in human understanding, from Socrates' wanderings through the streets of Athens to the innovations of the Industrial Revolution. People of faith, who believe in a divine author of Creation, believe that the act of discovery is sacred, whether in the realm of philosophy, physics, economics or the study of the human mind.

The Jewish people in particular affirm that beginning with the Revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai, God entrusted eternal teachings and values to us that we must cherish and study diligently above all else, for they represent the terms of the special covenant that God made with us. All people, regardless of their faith background, should value the accumulation of knowledge because it is the way to truth and a prerequisite to human growth.

TORAT CHAIM
חיים
LIFE

We believe in bringing values to life.

Jewish thought asserts that truth is made available to human beings not simply so that they can marvel at it but also so that they can use it. Students studying literature, computer science, law, psychology or anything else are expected to take what they learn and implement it within their own lives as well as apply it to the real world around them.

When people see a problem that needs addressing, their responsibility is to draw upon the truths they uncovered during their studies in finding a solution. They must live truth in the real world, not simply study it in the classroom.

TORAT ADAM
אדם
INFINITE HUMAN WORTH

We believe in the infinite worth of each and every human being.

Judaic tradition first introduced to the world the radical proposition that each individual is created in the divine image and accordingly possesses incalculable worth and value.

The unique talents and skills each individual possesses are a reflection of this divine image, and it is therefore a sacred task to hone and develop them. The vast expansive human diversity that results from this process is not a challenge but a blessing. Each of us has our own path to greatness.

TORAT CHESED
חסד
COMPASSION

We believe in the responsibility to reach out to others in compassion.

Even as we recognize the opportunities of human diversity, Jewish tradition emphasizes the importance of common obligations. In particular, every human being is given the same responsibility to use his or her unique gifts in the service of others; to care for their fellow human beings; to reach out to them in thoughtfulness, kindness and sensitivity; and to form a connected community.

TORAT ZION
ציון
REDEMPTION

We believe that humanity's purpose is to transform our world for the better and move history forward.

In Jewish thought, the concept of redemption represents the conviction that while we live in an imperfect world, we have a responsibility to strive toward its perfection. Regardless of a person's personal convictions about whether social perfection is attainable or even definable, it is the act of working toward it that gives our lives meaning and purpose. This common striving is an endeavor that brings all of humanity together.

The Jewish people's task to build up the land of Israel into an inspiring model society represents this effort in microcosm. But it is part of a larger project that includes all of humankind. If the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice, then redemption represents our responsibility to work together in the service of God to move history forward.

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