

# Initiative: BE A LEADER WITH PURPOSE

## Study Packet • Parshat Yitro

*"...In order that they hear, and in order that they learn and fear the Lord, your G-d, and they will observe all the words of this Torah"—Deuteronomy*

### Dear Leaders,

This week we take a look at individuality, and the unique power of every person.

We are not meant to all be the same! Each of us has a unique mission that only we can accomplish. Moreover, when we can recognize the specific talents and positive traits of those around us, we help them to see their own potential. In doing so, we give them a priceless gift that endures for all time: we show them their power. This is true for any person that we interact with, whether it is our co-worker, friend, or relative, and is especially true for our children or students.

As the Rebbe explained: People are souls, with the potential for perfection implicit within them. And nothing brings out a soul's potential as much as interacting and uniting with other souls. Imperfect individuals, brought together in love and fellowship, make perfect communities. (Sicha on Parshat Vayakhel, 25th of Adar I, 5752)

And that's exactly the purpose of our gatherings during this Hakhel year—to learn and be inspired from one another.

We hope you enjoy this week's study packet as we explore different facets of individuality. Tell us how you view your individuality. What makes you, uniquely you? We love to hear from you!

Wishing you a wonderful week and a thought-provoking gathering of study and inspiration.

**Chana Weisberg,**  
Editor, TJW

## A MULTITUDE

By Tzvi Freeman

The One Above did not want His creation to be a sort of simple oneness, homogeneous and uniform, with no distinction between one creation and the next. On the contrary, He desired a multitude—a tremendous multitude, to the point that we exclaim, "How many are Your works, oh G-d!"

And not in number alone. They are diverse, and their diversity has great meaning. Upon beholding any one of those creations we can exclaim, "How great are Your works, oh G-d!" Because these differences are not insignificant, arbitrary differences. Rather, the uniqueness of each individual creation is a commentary all of its own on the greatness of its Creator.

So too, it is the differences among human beings, not their sameness, that makes them precious in their Creator's eyes.

*Sichot Kodesh, 5738, vol. 2, pp. 201-203.*



# WHAT THE NUMBER THREE TEACHES US ABOUT PARENTING DO'S AND DON'TS

By Chana Weisberg

*“My children are constantly fighting,” laments Susan, a mother of three. “They bicker about the size of their dinner portions. They argue over whose turn it is to do a chore. They fight over who is smarter or friendlier. Will there ever be peace in my home?”*

This week’s Torah reading, Yitro, records the momentous event of the Jewish people receiving the Torah.

*“In the third month after the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, they came to the desert of Sinai . . . and Israel encamped there opposite the mountain.” (Ex. 19:1-2)*

The Mechilta notes: *Everywhere else it is written, “they traveled . . . they encamped” in the plural, meaning with dissenting opinions. Here, however, it is written “and Israel encamped,” in the singular form, since all were equally of one heart.*

Although it is natural for a multitude of people to have dissenting opinions, when the Jewish people arrived to receive the Torah they were “as one man, with one heart.”

The time in which this occurred—during the *third* month after the Exodus—helped create the condition for this exceptional harmony.

The Talmud notes the predominance of the number three: “A threefold Torah, to a threefold people, through a third-born, on a third day, in the third month.” (Shabbat 88a)

What is so special about the number three that the Torah, whose purpose is to bring peace and unity to mankind, was given in this month? And what psychological quality can we learn from this number in our efforts to foster greater harmony among our children?

The giving of the Torah in the third month teaches us that Torah values diversity and individuality.

“One” implies that there exists only a single reality and suggests absolute conformity. “Two” indicates divisiveness

and disparity, as in two opposing, rival approaches. “Three” finds an underlying unity between disparate entities.

When two biblical passages contradict each other, the meaning can be determined by a third biblical text, which reconciles them both by finding their deeper, concealed harmony. On the surface, the two verses may seem to disagree. But the third verse resolves their disagreement, not by “taking sides” and agreeing with one verse over the other, but by showing that the two are actually in consonance. (Sifra, Intro).

*The Torah wasn’t given in the first month.*

The number “one” suggests exactness and conformity. While the Torah expects law and order, it still respects our individual natures and our creative expressions.

Conflict may arise between people when conformity is demanded. As a parent, do you hear yourself saying, “The rules in this house are that everyone must strictly follow this routine”? What happens when a child doesn’t comfortably fit into your neat box? What if a child isn’t able to follow a set regimen, a firm schedule, or an inflexible list of expectations?

Recognizing and validating a child’s uniqueness may curtail some of the strife among siblings.

*The Torah wasn’t given in the second month of the year.*



The number “two” is indicative of two rivaling opposites.

Conflict arises when people feel that they are being compared to, or “pitted” against, each other. As a parent, do you hear yourself saying: “Why can’t you be like your sister, whose room is always so neat?” or “Why doesn’t your brother ever need to be reminded to do his chores?”

One of your children may be particularly neat, while another might be highly creative. Contrasting the two is not only unfair; it can be destructive.

*The Torah, whose purpose is peace,  
was given in the third month.*

The message of “three” is the beauty of having a world full of endless possibilities, nuances, and talents coming together in the harmonious goal of creating greater goodness.

So, teach your child the power of three:

1. To appreciate himself for who he is—not by comparing himself to another, nor by judging

himself against a rigid set of expectations.

2. To value the special qualities that she has, rather than see herself as lacking a specific quality.
3. To realize that working with others won’t diminish him, but will help him (and those around him) achieve a greater, common good.

Our mission as parents is to utilize the power of three—to uncover and actualize the special talents and contributions of all of our children.

**Ideas for discussion:**

1. How can you utilize the power of three to help those around you?
2. Why does comparing people often have disastrous results?
3. When is conformity positive? When is it negative?



# CRACKED VESSELS

By Chaya Sarah Silberberg

An old Chinese woman had two water cans which were attached to a yoke. Each day she put the yoke over her shoulders and went down to the river, filled the cans, and walked back to her modest hut. The water can on the right side of the yoke was fine and sturdy; when she arrived home it was always full. But the can on the left had a crack in it. By the time the woman arrived home, half the water was usually gone.

The water can always felt inferior to his partner. He was ashamed that he was cracked and wasn’t pulling his weight. One day he turned to the woman and apologized for being defective. The woman smiled gently and said, “Did you think I didn’t know that you had a crack, and water dripped from you? Look at the path from the river to my hut. Do you see all the beautiful flowers that are growing on the one side of the path? Those are the flowers that I planted there, that you watered every day as I walked home from the river.”

*My sister had a severely disabled child, a beautiful boy who could not walk, talk, hold his head up, control any limb of his body. But Yankie could smile and he could laugh. He radiated peace, tranquility, and happiness; because his body was merely a shadow of a body, it could not conceal the holy soul that occupied it. The purity of his soul shone through his eyes and had a powerful effect on everyone who knew him. He inspired love. He inspired people to devote themselves to helping others. And he taught everyone to look beyond the façade of a body and to see the Divine soul that is the essence of the person.*

**Ideas for discussion:**

1. How can we find the spark of Divinity in every individual?

# FAQ

## Do You Want to Become a Diamond?

By Aron Moss

**Question:** *This is going to sound weird, but it's serious. I have a friend who is a very intelligent, beautiful and articulate young woman. She is also a conceptual artist. She has now announced what she calls her "ultimate artwork"—she intends to sign a contract with a company that will cremate her body after she dies and compress her remains to form a diamond. She is selling the rights to this diamond, made of her body . . . Needless to say, I was horrified when I found out. What can I say to change her mind from doing something from which her soul and body may never recover for worlds and worlds to come?*

**Answer:** I have respect for your friend. She seeks immortality. She wants to transcend the limitations of a finite worldly existence and leave a lasting impression on the world long after her time here comes to an end. These are noble ambitions. But she is going about it the wrong way. Cremation is not the Jewish way.

The Jewish mission is not to become a diamond after you die, but to discover the diamond within yourself during your lifetime; not to make your lifeless body into a work of art, but rather to make your life itself into a work of art.

Within your body, you have a soul, shimmering like a diamond in the deepest part of your identity. Your body temporarily encases your soul for the duration of your lifetime on this earth. The body can be either a hindrance to the soul by concealing its light, or a vehicle for the soul's light to be fully expressed. It depends on how you live your life.

If we live a life of hedonism and selfishness, if our body and its cravings become the focus of our existence, then the diamond that is our soul gets buried beneath the body's layers of physicality, and its light is prevented from shining. But if we live a life of purpose, doing what is good rather than what feels good—a life in which the desires of our soul overpower the demands of body and we fill each day with acts of goodness and holiness—then the light the soul is not dimmed by the body. On the contrary, the body becomes the vehicle for the soul's light to shine. By refining

our character, bringing light to those around us, and maintaining the purity and innocence of our soul, we become a living, breathing diamond, a divine work of art.

We are truly immortalized by the good that we do in our lifetime. Whether or not we see it, our every act of goodness and holiness makes an eternal impression. Even the most trivial act of goodness impacts the world for the better, and the positive energy we create through our good deeds resonates throughout the world for eternity.

Even if you have been neglecting your soul, it can always be polished and returned to its original shine. For a diamond may become covered in layers of muck, but beneath it all the diamond always retains its luster. As long as you are alive, you have the power to change, to uncover your soul's power and let it shine.

To make a diamond out of a dead body is no great feat. To make a diamond out of yourself while you are still alive—that is a taste of eternity.

### **Ideas for discussion:**

1. What does living a life of purpose mean to you?
2. How can the light of our soul be dimmed? How can it be ignited?

