

Erev Shavuot 5783

Source Sheet by Rabbi Marina Yergin

שמות י"ט:א-ו

(א) בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְּבַר סִינַי: (ב) וַיִּסְעוּ מִרְפִּידִים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְּבַר סִינַי וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּמִדְבַּר וַיַּחֲזֹּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶד הַהָר: (ג) וּמִשָּׁה עָלָה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים וַיְקַרָּא אֵלָיו יְהוָה מִן־הַהָר לֵאמֹר **כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְתֹגִיד לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:** (ד) אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרָיִם וְאֲשָׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל־כַּנְּפֵי נְשָׂרִים וְאָבֵא אֶתְכֶם אֵלָי: (ה) וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמַעַתְּ תִשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וְהִיתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים כִּי־לִי כָל־הָאָרֶץ: (ו) וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי מְמַלְכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קֹדֹשׁ אֲלֶה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבַּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Exodus 19:1-6

(1) On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai. (2) Having journeyed from Rephidim, they entered the wilderness of Sinai and encamped in the wilderness. Israel encamped there in front of the mountain, (3) and Moses went up to God. The LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, **“Thus shall you say to the house of Jacob and declare to the children of Israel:** (4) ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me. (5) Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, (6) but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

Why did Torah have to say "house of Jacob" and then "children of Israel"? Isn't it the same group of people?

Chizkuni¹, Exodus 19:3:2

לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְתֹגִיד לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, “and explain in detail to the Children of Israel!” According to Rashi², ...the word וְתֹגִיד, *v'tagid*, which is uncharacteristically spelled with the letter י, *yod*, in the middle as derived from the word גִּיד, *gid*, meaning “a tough sinew,” as a hint that some of the commandments will be found to present a real challenge for those willing to observe them....

¹ Rabbi Hezekiah ben Manoah (1250-1310) was a French rabbi and student.

² Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (1040-1105) was a medieval French rabbi and author.

Tur HaAroch³, Exodus 19:3:4

...Another possible way of explaining the difference in meaning between the expression *בית יעקב*, *beit Ya'akov*, "house of Jacob" and *בני ישראל*, *b'nei Yisrael*, "children of Israel" is that the former refers to the people presently at Mount Sinai, whereas the latter refers to as yet unborn generations of Jews.

How do we understand the two different ways of talking to the different groups, *כה תאמר*, *coh tomar*, "thus say" and *תגיד*, *tagid*, "declare/demand"?

Or HaChaim⁴ on Exodus 19:3:8-9

...When God was about to give the Torah to the people He intended to make that event one which would bestow the maximum merit on them. He had two options. First, to address them with words of love and fondness. The result of such an address would be to implant in the people so much love that they would accept the Torah and qualify for the maximum amount of reward. The disadvantage accompanying such a method of giving the Torah would be the risk that the people would begin to feel so familiar with God that they would lose their sense of awe.... There is always the danger that the "son" may take the love of the "father" for granted and abuse it on occasion.

God's second alternative was to address the children of Israel in His capacity as a Master speaking to His servants. The advantage of such an approach was that the Israelites would not dare take any of the commandments lightly. On the other hand, such an approach would make it impossible for them to merit the greatest reward possible [doing *mitzvot* out of love].

Keeping all this in mind, God opted for a method which would combine both approaches. When He told Moses *כה תאמר*, *coh tomar*, He meant that Moses should use the following approach: "on the one hand speak to the people in a friendly soft-spoken approach, but *תגיד*, *tagid*, employ also words tough as sinews."Every Jew needs to be aware of this dual relationship at all times....

³ Tur HaAroch, a commentary on the Torah, is written by R' Jacob ben Asher (c. 1269 - c. 1343), known as Ba'al ha-Turim.

⁴ Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (1696-1743), a Talmudist and kabbalist, wrote Or HaChaim, his commentary on the Torah.