

## Yitro Aliyah Summary

**General Overview:** In this week's reading of Yitro, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, arrives at the Israelite encampment and advises them to set up a smoothly functioning legal system. The Israelites experience the divine revelation at Mount Sinai, and hear the Ten Commandments.

**First Aliyah:** Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, having heard about all the miracles that G-d wrought for the Israelites, came from his native Midian to the Israelite desert encampment—bringing along Moses' wife and two sons. Moses warmly greeted his father-in-law, and recounted to him all that G-d had done to the Egyptians. Jethro thanked G-d for all the miracles, and offered thanksgiving sacrifices.

**Second Aliyah:** Jethro observed Moses adjudicating all the disputes that arose among the Israelites. Jethro suggested to Moses that such a system, one that placed such a great burden on Moses' shoulders, would eventually wear him down. Instead, he advised Moses to appoint a hierarchy of wise and righteous judges, and to delegate his responsibilities—with Moses presiding only over the most difficult cases. This would also free up Moses' time to teach the Israelites the teachings of the Torah that he hears from G-d.

**Third Aliyah:** Moses accepted his father-in-law's suggestion, and set up a hierarchical judicial system. Jethro then returned to his native land.

**Fourth Aliyah:** Six weeks after leaving Egypt, the Israelites arrived in the Sinai Desert and encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai. Moses ascended the mountain, where G-d gave him a message to transmit to the people. Included in this message was G-d's designation of the Israelites as His "treasure out of all peoples" and a "kingdom of princes and a holy nation."

**Fifth Aliyah:** Moses conveyed to the people G-d's words, and the people in turn accepted upon themselves to do all that G-d commands of them. G-d then instructed Moses to have the Israelites prepare themselves, because in three days' time He would reveal Himself atop the mountain to the entire nation. The Israelites were commanded to sanctify themselves, and were warned not to approach the mountain until after the divine revelation. On the morning of the third day, thunder, lightning, a thick cloud and the piercing sound of a *shofar* emanated from the mountaintop. Mt. Sinai was smoking and trembling, while the sound of the *shofar* grew steadily louder. Moses escorted the shuddering and frightened nation to the mountain, and settled them at its base.

**Sixth Aliyah:** G-d descended upon the mountain, and summoned Moses to its summit. G-d instructed Moses to again warn the Israelites about the tragic end that awaited anyone who approaches the mountain itself. Only Moses and his brother Aaron were allowed on the mountain during this time. G-d then spoke the Ten Commandments to the Israelite nation. They are: 1) Belief in G-d. 2) Not to worship idols. 3) Not to take G-d's name in vain. 4) To keep the Shabbat. 5) To honor parents. 6) Not to murder. 7) Not to commit adultery. 8) Not to steal. 9) Not to bear false witness. 10) Not to covet another's property.

**Seventh Aliyah:** The Israelites were left traumatized by the overwhelming revelation, the awesome "light and sound" show. They turned to Moses and asked that from then on he should serve as an intermediary between them and G-d: Moses should hear G-d's word and transmit it to the people. Moses agreed. The reading concludes with a prohibition against creating idolatrous graven images—considering that no image was seen when G-d revealed Himself on Mount Sinai—and the commandment to erect a sacrificial altar. The altar stones should not be hewn with iron implements, nor should there be steps leading to the top of the altar.