

## SEDRAH SELECTIONS PARSHAS YISRO 5775 BS"D

Ch. 18, v. 3: "V'es shnei VO'NEHOH" - Why are the children called HER children and not Moshe's? The Zohar answers that since she brought them up, the Torah relates them to her. In verse five where it says "u'VONOV," - and HIS children, according to the Zohar this refers to Yisro's sons. Possibly according to the common explanation that it refers to Moshe's sons, they are now called HIS sons because they are now being brought to him, allowing him input into their upbringing.

Ch. 18, v. 9: "Va'yichad Yisro al kol hatovoh asher ossoh Hashem l'Yisroel asher hitzilo miyad Mitzrayim" - The gemara Sanhedrin 106a says that Yisro and Bilom were among Paroh's advisers. Bilom said to Yisro, "Eison mosho'vecho" (Bamidbar 24:21), which the gemara interprets as "I am surprised that you who are an advisor to Paroh will rise to have his seat among the strong ones, the leaders, of the bnei Yisroel."

We can thus explain our verse as follows: Yisro rejoiced for all the good that had befallen the bnei Yisroel. As well he also rejoiced for his being saved ("hitzilo" refers to Yisro) from the hand of Egypt, as he broke away from their schemes and joined the bnei Yisroel. (B'eir Mayim Chaim miTchernovitz)

Ch. 18, v. 11: "ASHER zodu a'leihem" - The gemara Sotah 11a says that Yisro realized that Hashem is the Master of all by virtue of His meting out punishment "measure for measure." The Egyptians diabolically planned against the bnei Yisroel, "ASHER" they deliberately planned against them. In turn the Egyptians suffered the ten plagues, whose acronym is "D-TZa-Ch--A-DaSH--B-ACH-V, which is numerically the same as ASHER, 501. (n.l.)

Ch. 18, v. 22: "V'shoftu es ho'om B'CHOL EIS" - And they shall judge the nation at ALL TIMES. Two Yerushalmis struck up a conversation, extolling the greatness of Rabbi Shmuel Salant, who was the Rov of Yerushalayim in his last years. One said that Rabbi Shmuel took his responsibility of being an halachic judge very seriously. On the night of Pesach, when all bnei Yisroel must drink four goblets of wine during the Seder, he felt that the wine affected the clarity of his mind and rendered him unfit to give halachic rulings. Because he felt responsible to be available to render decisions, he quickly conducted the Seder, no doubt a great spiritual sacrifice for Rabbi Shmuel, and went to sleep immediately afterwards. This rest would clear his mind and if he was needed to give a ruling he could be awakened.

The second Yerushalmi was not very impressed. He even questioned the veracity of the story, saying that although there would be many many questions that would arise prior to the Yom Tov of Pesach, once the Yom Tov had begun and everyone sat down to the Seder, the likelihood of anyone having a "shaaloh," an halachic query, was quite remote.

The first Yerushalmi did not take this response sitting down. He shot back, "Don't think that a serious question could not arise on the night of the Seder! Let me tell you what transpired one Pesach night after Rabbi Shmuel had already completed his own Seder."

A newly married "yungerman" appeared at the doorstep of Rabbi Shmuel and asked to speak to the Rov. Rabbi Shmuel asked him to step inside and found a very pained young man entering with a bowl of soup in his hands. The "yungermen" pointed to the middle of the soup where a grain of barley was floating. Rabbi Shmuel gently took him by the hand and led him out of his home. When in the street the young fellow started sobbing, stating that he had just married, thinking that he had entered a very G-d fearing family, and now he felt cheated, since he surmised that his wife's family was not careful enough to rid itself of chometz to the point of being so careless as to even have overlooked chometz in their kitchen.

Rabbi Shmuel asked the newlywed to close his mouth tightly until being told to open it again. He complied, not knowing what to expect next. The venerable Rabbi lifted the young man's shtreimel

off his head and began to shake it quite vigorously. The "yungerman" felt himself being pelted with light small objects. When the Rov told him that he may open his mouth the Rov said, "What you just felt were numerous barley grains that remained stuck in your shtreimel from the time of your "aufruf." (The custom in Yerusholayim was to throw roasted barley grains at the "chosson" on the occasion of his "aufruf," as is mentioned in the Mishneh K'subos.) Before you find fault in your mother-in-law's kitchen, find fault in your own shtreimel!"

So our Yerushalmi friend brought home the point that there is a need for a Rov to have a clear head even late on Seder night, "V'shoftu es ho'om B'CHOL EIS."

A second story related to this theme took place on the other side of the world, in the USA. A well known halachic authority made himself available, not only to the people of his community, but to all who called him from anywhere in the world. This meant that he would be available for halachic queries at any hour of the night as well. To make it convenient for himself, he placed the telephone on a night table next to his bed so that he would not have to leave his bed to lift the receiver. One night he heard the telephone ringing and he reached out for it but it was not there. It was surely in the bedroom as he heard it ringing loudly. Upon turning on the light in the room he saw that the phone was now on the opposite side of the room, beyond his wife's bed. He dutifully washed "negel vasser" and answered the call.

He asked his wife why she has placed the telephone in such an inconvenient location. She responded (She is the daughter of a Rov who answers halachic queries as well.) that she noticed that sometimes he would respond to a question while he was not fully alert, as he had been awakened from a deep sleep. She was afraid that without his full faculties he might give incorrect information. If the telephone would be at the far end of the room, he would then wash "negel vasser" as well as having to take a short walk to the telephofnsne. She also suggested that he should answer the phone and request that the caller wait for a short bit of time while he would wash his face with cold water to wake him up totally. Then he would be able to respond while completely alert. He accepted her suggestion and thanked her profusely. "V'shoftu es ho'om B'CHOL EIS."

Ch. 19, v. 3: "U'Moshe oloh" – And Moshe ascended – When Moshe ascended Har Sinai he asked Hashem, "Why are You giving the Torah through me alone, just one person?" Hashem responded that Moshe was capable of transmitting all 613 mitzvos all on his own, as is indicated by the appellation "Moshe Rabbeinu," whose numerical value is 613. Moshe then asked, "If one person is capable on his own to transmit the Torah, why is it required to have a quorum of 10 people to perform a 'dovor shebikdushoh,' an act of special sanctity, for example to say Kadish, Kedushoh, or Borchu?" Hashem responded that Moshe had the spiritual power of 10 people, as indicated by his name Moshe. When it is spelled out "b'milluy," Mem is Mem-Mem, Shin is Shin-Yud-Nun, Hei is Hei-Hei, we have a total of 450, equal to 10 times "odom." (Medrash Plioh)

Ch. 20, v. 15: "Va'yaar ho'om va'yonu'u va'yaamdu meirochoke" - The Baal Haturim says that this verse is the source for our swaying (shoklen) when we study Torah, as the Torah was given in an atmosphere of awe, trembling, and sweating. The story is told of the Chasam Sofer telling one of his senior students to approach a younger student who was quite diligent in his Torah studies and tell him that the Chasam Sofer requested that he leave the Yeshiva. The senior student was quite surprised and asked why this was being done. The Chasam Sofer said that the student was not Jewish. The senior student was very surprised, but did the Chasam Sofer's bidding. When he pressed the young student about this, he admitted that he was not Jewish. At a later time the senior student asked the Chasam Sofer why he allowed him into the Yeshiva in the first place. The Chasam Sofer responded that he had assumed that the young man was Jewish, but after noticing for a while that he sat still as a block of wood while learning Torah, not even swaying

slightly, he realized that the student was not Jewish. Anyone whose soul was present at Mount Sinai at the time of the giving of the Torah swayed, and this remains in our blood even today. The Holy Baal Shem Tov interprets: "If you sway mightily to and fro so that everyone can see that you do a mitzvoh with much emotion, "va'yaar ho'om va'yonu'u," this is an indication that you are very distanced from Hashem, "va'yaamdu meirochoke."

The Holy Admor of Kotzk interprets: "Even if you sway mightily to and fro and delude yourself into thinking that you have reached a high spiritual level, remember that you are still quite distanced from Hashem, "va'yaamdu meirochoke."

## OROH V'SIMCHOH - MESHECH CHOCHMOH ON PARSHAS YISRO

Ch. 18, v. 3,4: "Sheim ho'echod Geirshome ki omar geir hoyisi b'eterz nochrioh, V'sheim ho'echod Eliezer ki Elokei ovi b'ezri va'yatzi'leini meicherev Paroh" - Wasn't Moshe first saved from the sword of Paroh when being judged for killing the Egyptian (2:12,15) before being a sojourner in the foreign land of Midyon where Yisro resided?

1) At the time of the birth of his first son Moshe was still a fugitive and on Paroh's most wanted list. He was not yet free of the sword of Paroh. However he was already in a foreign land, not being among his brethren.

(Chizkuni)

2) At the time of the birth of his first son, Moshe was still relatively new to the community in Midyon. Had he named his first son Eliezer as a praise to Hashem for saving him from the sword of Paroh, he feared that the Midyanites and even his father-in-law would banish him from the community, or even have him turned over to Paroh, since he had killed an Egyptian. His second son was born after he had lived there for a while and at that point he felt confident that he had built up a reputation as an upright person and they would not evict him. (Abarbanel)

3) If one has experienced a number of experiences which have made a profound impression upon him, he should not name his child after a more distant happening, but rather after the most recent. (Ohr Hachaim Hakodosh and Imrei Noam)

4) "Geir hoyisi b'eterz nochrioh" refers not to Moshe's feeling as a foreigner in the land of Midyon, but rather to his sojourning in this ephemeral world. (Ohr Hachaim Hakodosh)

5) Moshe knew that a descendant of his firstborn son, Y'honoson ben Geirshome, would become a functionary for idol worship. He therefore did not want to give him a name that would incorporate the name of Hashem in it. (MESHECH CHOCHMOH)

6) Along the lines of the previous answer, perhaps Moshe was reluctant to give a name to his first son which incorporated Hashem's name in it since he had agreed to Yisro's condition upon marrying Tziporoh, that he would allow his first son to be raised with the theological training of idol worship as per the Mechilta #67 and Yalkut Shimoni remez #268.

7) Although chronologically being a sojourner in the foreign land of Midyon was experienced after being saved from the sword of Paroh, being away from his brethren who suffered inhuman servitude under Paroh was foremost in his mind, this in spite of human nature to first care about saving one's own skin, which was Moshe's being saved from the sword of Paroh. His extreme concern for his brethren is accentuated even more by virtue of his not having been brought up among them, as he was raised in the palace of Paroh. As well, his first experience of involvement with them was very short-lived as after smiting the Egyptian he was to be executed and escaped, leaving Egypt. In spite of his limited involvement with his brethren, he took to heart first and foremost their suffering, thus naming his first son after his situation of being away from them. This is the quality of a true and caring leader. (MESHECH CHOCHMOH)

8) "Geir hoyisi b'eterz nochrioh" refers not to Moshe's feeling as a foreigner in the land of Midyon, but rather to his feeling as a foreigner in the land of Egypt. He yearned to live in Eretz Yisroel, in spite of never having been there, being born and having only lived in Egypt, and

having ALL the bnei Yisroel living in Egypt. (Rabbi Uri Meir Kahanov in Mishmeres haKohanim)

Ch. 20, v. 3: "Lo yi'h'yeh l'cho elohim acheirim AL PONOY" - The Rambam in his list of negative mitzvos lists as the first, second, fifth, and six mitzvos "Lo yi'h'yeh, Lo saa'seh l'cho fessel, Lo sishtacha'veh, and V'lo so'ovdeim." The Ramban says that all of these are to be considered one mitzvoh. He proves this from the gemara Makos 23b-24a that derives from the words "Torah tzivoh lonu Moshe" (Dvorim 33:4) that Moshe taught the bnei Yisroel 611 mitzvos, the numeric value of the word TORAH, while the TWO mitzvos "Onochi" and "Lo yi'h'yeh," the bnei Yisroel heard directly from Hashem. If we count the negative commands that are found in the verse that begins with "Lo yi'h'yeh" as separate mitzvos, we have a total of five mitzvos that we heard directly from Hashem. This leaves us with only 608 mitzvos that we heard from Moshe, totally contrary to the words of the gemara. The Ramban, in asking his question, assumes that along with "lo yi'h'yeh" we must include the complete verse with the cantellations of "taam ho'elyone" as being heard directly from Hashem or this complete parsha until the next paragraph space. Indeed, the Megilas Esther, a commentator on the Sefer Hamitzvos l'hoRambam, answers the Ramban's difficulty by saying that only the first words of the verse "Lo yi'h'yeh" were heard directly from Hashem, leaving us with only two mitzvos, "Onochi" and "Lo yi'h'yeh." However, the MESHECH CHOCHMOH gives a most interesting answer based on the words of the Rambam himself, in Moreh N'vuchim 2:33. The Rambam writes that hearing "Onochi" and "Lo yi'h'yeh" does not mean that the bnei Yisroel actually heard the words of these two mitzvos articulated. Rather, they heard a most awesome celestial sound.

(Perhaps this is indicated in Dvorim 4:12, "Kole dvorim a'tem shomim," - You hear a voice of words, but not the words themselves. Another allusion to this might be in Dvorim 4:35, "Atoh horeiso lodaas," - You were SHOWN to know, but did not hear it, since the verse does not say "Atoh SHOMATO lodaas," "ki Hashem hu ho'Elokim," this is "Onochi," "ein ode milvado," this is "Lo yi'h'yeh.")

The sound emanating from heaven left the bnei Yisroel with the clear knowledge that "Onochi" and "Lo yi'h'yeh," - I am your G-d and there shall be no other besides me. This is what is meant by the gemara Makos. Since they did not grasp the other three mitzvos from this sound, only two were heard (understood), and Moshe taught them 611 mitzvos including the three following "Lo yi'h'yeh." Moshe, on the other hand, was able to discern the actual words conveyed with the sound and heard the articulated five mitzvos in the verse of "Lo yi'h'yeh l'cho."

#### CHAMISHOH MI YODEI'A – FIVE QUESTIONS ON THE WEEKLY SEDRAH – PARSHAS YISRO 5775 – BS"D

1) Ch. 18, v. 5: "Uvonov v'ishto" – And his sons and his wife – The simple meaning is Moshe's sons and Moshe's wife. Why then does this verse change from verse 3, where it says "uvo'nehoh," and HER sons?

2) Ch. 18, v. 21: "Y'rei Elokim anshei emes" – G-d fearing people of truth – If they are G-d fearing what need is there to add "people of truth" since this trait is included in "y'rei Elokim?"

3) Ch. 18, v. 21: "Sonei votza" – Haters of monetary gain – A- What is this characteristic? B-Rashi explains "shesonim m'monom badin." What does this mean?

4) Ch. 18, v. 23: "V'yocholta amode" – And you will be able to stand – If Moshe were to not follow Yisro's advice would he not be able to stand?

5) Ch. 19, v. 3: “U’Moshe oloh” – And Moshe ascended – On Simchas Torah before Musof we sing “Hiskabtzu.” One of the stanzas contains the words, Mi oloh lamorome, Moshe oloh lamorome.” We repeat “mi oloh lamorome” numerous times. Why?

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ANSWERS:

#1

Tosfos Hasho’leim on verse 3 asks why the verse there calls the sons hers, without his making any reference to our verse. He answers that since she was involved in their upbringing (during the time Moshe was away) they are called HER sons. Perhaps in our verse, where they are being brought to Moshe, they are called HIS because they are now coming under his tutelage and influence again.

However, the Holy Zohar says that “uvonov v’ishto” refers to Yisro’s sons and wife, so the change from verse is simply understood. Pirush Yonoson ben Uziel explains that although Yisro had seven daughters and no sons, this was only up to the time Moshe came into their lives. Once he joined Yisro’s family he was blessed with sons, similar to Lovon. However, the verses in parshas Shmos do not say that Yisro had no sons. They only state that he had seven daughters. If you are wondering why Yisro would send his daughters to shepherd when he had sons, perhaps his sons were the youngest children in the family and too young to tend to the sheep at the time Moshe came upon the scene.

Why in the next verse Yisro sends a message to Moshe that he has come with “your wife and HER children,” reverting back to the terminology of verse 3, is explained by the Abarbanel. Yisro is stressing that he came to meet with Moshe, and not only to bring Moshe’s wife and his children to him. Thus he says “HER children,” the mother and HER children have also been brought, but his main stress is, “Ani chosencho Yisro bo eilecho.”

#2

Rabbi Yehudoh Chosid (#1,384) says that even if a person is G-d fearing there is a need to have as a judge someone who knows halacha so well that he comes to the proper – emes – conclusion.

#3

A-

- 1) They are hated by those who are avid money accumulating enthusiasts. (Rabbeinu Yonoh ibn G’anach)
- 2) They hate bribery. (Tur, Rashbam)
- 3) They hate the idea of becoming rich. (Tur)
- 4) They hate to take advantage of someone for their own monetary gain even where it is permitted. For example, if a person had an object that was rightfully valued at a dollar, and this was a proper price right now because the same object is not available anywhere else. The prospective purchaser is ready to pay, but before the transaction was completed the seller became aware of the arrival of many more of the same objects, and thus its proper price is now cut in half. Rather than completing the deal on the spot before the purchaser is aware of this, the seller advises him and admits that it is now worth half as much. (Rabbi Yehudoh chosid #1,204)

B-

- 1) If they would be threatened to judge in the favour of one side or else their property will be destroyed, they will still not budge and judge the case on its merits, no matter who comes out winning. This is an application of “Lo soguru mipnei ish.” (Baa’lei Tosfos)
- 2) They are so involved in judging that they neglect their own properties and possessions to the point that they deteriorate. (Rabbi Yehudoh Chosid)

#4

The Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim 1:13 writes that the word “amidoh” has three connotations. The first is simply standing. The second is stopping, as in “Vataamode mi’leddes.” The third is sustaining and continuing something, as here.

#5

One could ask this question: Why is the answer to “mi oloh lamorome” limited to Moshe? Eliyohu, Chanoch, and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi also ascended to heaven alive. The answer is that once they were so spiritually elevated that they were able to ascend to the heavens they never came back down again. Moshe was on such a unique level that he went up, came down, and went up again, possibly even a third time according to some Rishonim. This is the unique power of Moshe, as he bridged the spiritual with the physical. This is why we repeat “mi oloh lamorome,” to indicate that Moshe was special in that he ascended numerous times. (Preface of the Haflo’oh)

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