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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
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PARASHA INSIGHTS

Yitro hears about all that Hashem did for the Jewish people when He took them out of Egypt and decides to join them. The first Rashi on this week's Parsha asks what exactly did Yitro hear that made him come to cling to the Bnei Yisrael? He states that Yitro heard specifically about the splitting of the sea and the war with Amalek.

The Meor Ve Shemesh is puzzled with this Rashi. What made Rashi single out these two specific occurrences? Surely the Pasuk could be understood in its simple format that Yitro heard everything that Hashem did i.e. the ten plagues and all the other miracles. Furthermore, when Rashi himself explains later in the Pasuk, he states clearly that Yitro also heard about the miracle of the Mann and the Well of Water. So why is it that Rashi seems to imply he only heard about the splitting of the sea and the war with Amalek?

A second question is asked. In our Parsha, we are told that Yitro took his daughter Tzipora and her two sons to meet the Bnei Yisrael. Why does the Torah link the two sons to Tzipora? Surely it should have said he took Tzipora Moshe's wife and his two

sons to meet him. The Torah goes out of its way to imply that they are her sons.

The Meor Vashemesh explains that Yitro heard about all the miracles and he decided that he too would serve Hashem. He would be like a Ger Toshav, keeping the seven Noachide laws. There was no need to join Klal Yisrael.

At Kriat Yam Suf, the Bnei Yisrael reached their highest level – VayaAminu B'Hashem UbEMoshe Avdo – they believed in Hashem and Moshe His servant. Even the simplest amongst them reached a level of prophecy higher than the later prophets. Yet soon after they reached Refidim, the Mefarshim explain that they were Rafu Yadayim BaTorah – were weak in Torah. They let their guard down and Amalek attacked. Yitro from the outside saw that someone can one day be on a spiritual high but yet on the next be prone to falling from this peak. He was worried that he too would fall from his spiritual enlightenment, and therefore decided that the only way to secure his high spiritual position was to cling to the Bnei Yisrael and Moshe in particular.

We can now understand why the Torah relates to the children as being her children. Yitro was saying in effect: "You named your children because you wanted them to be certain type. Gershon, so that he would be a stranger in this world and his main focus on being a Ben Olam Habah, and Eliezer because you wanted Eliezer to be someone who has Emuna in Hashem. Now they are slipping, they need to be near you. Until we come to you, and stay in close proximity, your children will be lost; they will be her children, separated from their father and from his beliefs. ►

23rd Shevat 5781

SHABBAT BEGINS: 4:40 PM

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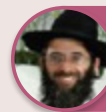
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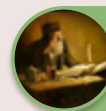
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In order for them to keep on the correct path they need to be close to you as well."

The Rambam in (Deot 6) says that there is a positive commandment in the Torah to cling to G-d. He asks if it possible to cling to G-d who has no physical existence. The Rambam explains that the way to fulfil this commandment is to cling to His people – i.e. the Talmidei Chachamim. By constantly being in their presence, even for mundane purposes such as eating with them at their table, drinking with them, doing business with them, marrying your daughters to them, one can fulfil this commandment. We see how important it is to always be located in an environment where the Torah is of central importance.

With this Rambam, we can also explain the Mishna in Avot. The Mishnah says that one should always be around Talmidei Chachamim, drinking thirstily from their words and sitting in their dust. One could understand why it is important to hear their words, but why must one sit in their dust? Based on what we have explained,

this is quite understandable. It is integral for a person to be constantly located amongst the righteous scholars because one puts himself in an environment which is conducive to growth and success in Torah, and even if all one is doing is sitting in their presence, this will ensure that a person does the right thing consistently and constantly.

Chazal write "Whoever attaches himself to evildoers, even if does not act as they do, is punished together with them; whoever attaches himself to those who perform Mitsvot, even if he does not join them in that performance, nonetheless is offered the same reward." There are spiritual accomplishments that are beyond the reach of many people. They need not despair, but change their strategy. They can lay claim to Devekut by associating with those for whom it is working reality – the Talmidei Chachamim. The Rambam observes that even this is not a workable solution. Not everyone has access to and can create a relationship with a genuine Talmid Chacham. The Torah must mean,

therefore, that by associating with the world of Talmidei Chachamim, one participates in the mitzvah of Devekut to the best of one's ability. If the association cannot be with a Talmid Chacham, it can be with people one degree of separation away – their students.

King David said, "Shivti b'vet Hashem kol yimei chayai" "May I sit in the house of G-d all the days of my life." How can one be in G-d's house all day every day? It is not possible. The answer is that even when you leave, you should take the lessons of G-d's house with you 24/7.

Let us work to be close to Talmidei Chachamim, Aseh Lecha Rav – appoint for ourselves a Rabbi that we can associate with- so that we can drink from his Torah, and through this gain Devekut to Hashem.

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI YITSHAK HAKOEN TAWIL - MIR KOLEL, JERUSALEM



PARASHA INSIGHTS

"And Yithro came..." (18:1)

The Talmud (Zevachim 116a) discusses what made Yithro, a gentile priest, come to join our nation? R. Yehoshua says it was the war of Amalek; R. Elazar HaModai says the giving of the Torah; R. Eliezer says the splitting of the sea!

R. Nathan Ordman z.t.l. asks that surely Yithro (originally one of Pharaoh's advisors) heard all about the Ten Plagues, the famous exodus from Egypt, and the splitting of the sea – these were such famous events that they no doubt became the talk of the world! If so, why does R. Elazar HaModai suggest that only the later giving of the Torah stirred Yithro to come?

He offers to us the following suggestion. Originally, Yithro most certainly heard about the plagues and the exodus. As a result he abandoned his idolatrous ways, and strengthened his belief in G-d. However, Yithro mistakenly felt that he could remain a believer in G-d whilst remaining in his hometown Midyan. Although surrounded there by idolaters, he would

be different, and would remain a staunch believer in G-d. R. Elazar HaModai however understood the question of the Talmud "What did Yithro hear and come" as expressing not merely what made him believe, but what made him move and join the Jewish people in the wilderness, leaving behind all his hometown luxuries! What made him realise that to be a faithful Jew entails living together with the community amongst other Jews, in an environment encouraging and fermenting spiritual growth in Torah and Mitzvot!

Our Torah is a living Torah! Yithro saw that by G-d giving over His Torah to our nation this implies that He wishes us to relate to Him. It is insufficient merely to acknowledge His existence, which could be carried out at home in Midyan! G-d gives us a unique way of life, demonstrating to us how to live holy lives with Him, emerging a treasured nation! The Torah calls for us to put our knowledge of G-d into practice, studying His Torah, involving ourselves with His Mitzvot! When the Torah was given, our people stood encamped by Mt.Sinai unified "like one man with one heart" (Rashi (19:2)) with one united goal - to serve G-d in the best possible manner! Yithro now understood that to accept upon himself Torah lifestyle demands leaving the corrupt Midyan, and moving to the barren wilderness together with the thriving committed Jewish community!

Many people mistakenly think that it is sufficient to theoretically believe in G-d and be 'a Jew at heart'! The Torah teaches us that true belief must be put

into practice! Belief is no theoretical fact! Our Torah is a living Torah, a way of life! The true commendable 'Jew at heart' is one who takes to heart his beliefs, performing and acting in accordance! Living in an environment that encourages communal spiritual growth in the traditional Torah mode is a most vital step enhancing us towards achieving our goal!

"On this day they came to the Wilderness of Sinai" (19:1).

Our verse opens the famous Chapter dealing with the Divine Revelation at Mt. Sinai. The Torah uses the present phrase on this day rather than the expected "on that day". Rashi explains to us that the Torah is teaching us that we must view every moment as if we are just now receiving the Torah anew! Our Torah affects every single moment of our lives. From the moment that we wake up in the morning, hundreds of religious laws and customs lead us through the day. Every step in life has its Torah solution! There is infinite wisdom and greatness contained in our holy Torah. When we sit down and study Torah, we must beware of the danger of "habit" turning our lifestyle into mere routine. Every moment of Torah study must be fresh! Every word of Torah should be approached with great excitement and enthusiasm! We must appreciate and cherish the great merit that we have to involve ourselves in studying G-d's holy Torah!

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI RAPHAEL PINTO

Imbued with great piety, Rabbi Raphael Pinto was a man fervently and unequivocally connected to the service of G-d and the performance of mitzvot. Many were those who had the immense merit to know and draw close to him. He was the son of Rabbi Haim Pinto of Casablanca (who himself was the grandson of Rabbi Haim Pinto of Mogador).

Rav Eliyahu Dahan heard with his own ears the story of an Arab who had a serious problem with a member of his family. They had entered into the cattle business together, and they trusted each other so much that no contract had been made between them, right up until the day that one of them tried to cut the other out of the business. Given the fact that there were never any documents that had been drawn up and signed, our man's feeling of being in the right didn't necessarily make him so.

Now the person that Rav Eliyahu Dahan had been listening to (our man in question) had a Jewish neighbour. She advised the man to visit Rabbi Raphael Pinto. It must be said that the man didn't have much faith, but in desperation went to his home. Rabbi Raphael Pinto warmly welcomed him, and the man lit a candle and began with the following innocent and sincere words: "Rabbi Pinto, I don't know you, but I want to believe in you. I want neither cattle nor money, but if I'm to lose everything, may my business partner, the person who so dishonestly tricked me, not profit either."

Rabbi Raphael Pinto consoled him as best as possible and promised that the miracle of the Tzaddik wouldn't delay in happening. At the end of the same week, the mother of our man, having come from the village, announced that all the cattle were dying. The stable they were in had

caught on fire and they had been seriously injured by the intoxicating smoke that was created by the blaze.

It was from the time of that story that our man regularly visited with the Tzaddik to thank, in his manner of prayer, both Rabbi Raphael and Rabbi Meir Pinto.

The home of Rabbi Raphael was insignificant in appearances but incredibly grand by virtue of the teachings that came out of it. In walking inside, independent of the joy and faith that filled the home, one could discern one great feature at the Tzaddik's, a feature that was probably the most important of all: Modesty.

It is said that a few days before his passing, Rabbi Haim Pinto of Casablanca gathered his sons together in order to bless them. When it came the turn of Rabbi Raphael, Rabbi Haim Pinto began to cry. When he was asked the reason for the tears rolling down his face, he declared that his son would die a horrible death.

And unfortunately, we know that his prophecy came true one day in 1980, 43 years after his death. In fact, an Arab in the neighborhood and two other individuals broke into Rabbi Raphael's home in the middle of the night and savagely beat him with an iron bar, then stole everything he had.

After a week of unbearable suffering, Rabbi Raphael rendered his soul to G-d. The Tzaddik's maid remembers that a few days before his passing, he said, "On the day that I die, a great darkness will ensue."

And so it was that on the night following his death, Casablanca found itself completely in the dark, an electrical failure having plunged the inhabitants of the city into a total blackout.

The Hilloula of Rabbi Raphael is Shevat 12. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

SELECTING FROM A MIXTURE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF FISH ON SHABBAT

The Rema (319:3), based on the Terumat Hadeshen (R. Yisrael Isserlin, 1390-1460, Austria), writes that two types of fish are considered distinct entities and the laws of Borer apply to selecting one type of fish from the assortment. Even if the pieces are large and easily distinguishable, one may only select the desired type, with his hands for immediate use.

The Rema continues and rules that if there is only one type of fish in the mixture, with an assortment of sizes, the laws of Borer do not apply and one may pick out the undesired fish. However, the Mishna Berura cites the Taz (Rabbi David Segal, Poland, 1586-1667) who is strict even in a mixture of one species. That is how the Chessed L'Alaphim rules, as well.

The Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), in Beshalach par. 2, writes that even though the majority of Poskim are lenient (most likely including the Shulchan Aruch), it is fitting to be stringent, yet one who is lenient has upon whom to rely. Hacham Ovadia, in Hazon Ovadia 4, p. 188) writes that the Taz is a lone opinion, and the Mateh Yehuda argues that this Taz is a novelty. Therefore, the Halacha is lenient, and the laws of Borer do not apply.

However, in cases where the same species has a variety of flavors or tastes, such as apples or dates, the Ben Ish Hai rules that the restrictions of Borer apply.

SUMMARY

The laws of Borer apply to a mixture of different types of fish, but there are no restrictions on selecting from a mixture of different sizes of the same item. ■



TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- ❶ Yitro had 7 names. Why was one of his names Yeter?
- ❷ News of which two events motivated Yitro to come join the Jewish People?
- ❸ What name of Yitro indicates his love for Torah?
- ❹ Why was Tzipora with her father, Yitro, and not with Moshe when Bnei Yisrael left Egypt?
- ❺ Why does verse 18:5 say that Yitro came to the desert - don't we already know that the Bnei Yisrael were in the desert?

Answer

❶ 18:1 - Because he caused a Parsha to be added to the Torah. Yeter means addition.
 ❷ 18:1 - Chovav.
 ❸ 18:1 - The splitting of the sea and the war against Amalek.
 ❹ 18:3 - When Aharon met Moshe with his family on their way down to Egypt. Aharon said to Moshe: "We're pained over the Jews already in Egypt, and you're bringing more Jews to Egypt?" Moshe, hearing this, sent his wife and children back to Midian.
 ❺ 18:5 - To show Yitro's greatness. He was living in a luxurious place, yet he went to the desert in order to study the Torah.



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