

RABBI GOLDBERG'S *Parsha Perspectives* FOR TODAY

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Yisro for your Shabbos Table
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Sponsored by Eli & Sara Malka Neger as a zechus for a refuah shleima for Chaya Esther Tehila bas Arielle Tsiporah and lilui nishmas Yitzchok Moshe ben Aaron Yaakov Yehoshua.

DVAR TORAH FOR THE FRIDAY NIGHT MEAL

Don't Just Point Out Problems – Solve Them!

Commenting on the first *pasuk* of Parshas Yisro, Rashi writes that Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law, had seven different names. Rashi proceeds to list all the names and explain their meanings. One of the names, Rashi writes, is יתר, and Yisro was given this name because יתר – פרשה אחת בתורה – a section of the Torah was added in his merit. As we read later, Yisro observed Moshe spending the entire day singlehandedly resolving the people's disputes, and he recommended appointing a network of judges to work alongside Moshe. This story was included in the Torah, such that an "extra" (יתר) portion was added due to Yisro.

In presenting this explanation, Rashi refers to the added section in the Torah as the section of ואתה תחזה. These are the words that Yisro used in offering his recommendation that Moshe appoint competent and worthy individuals to serve as judges (ואתה תחזה מכל העם) 18:21 – (אנשי חיל יראי אלוקים....).

Rav Moshe Shternbuch, in *Ta'am Va'da'as*, notes that these words do not actually begin the story. Yisro opened his advice to Moshe with the words לא טוב הדבר – "That which you are doing is not good" (18:17). However, the title Rashi chose for this section is not these words, but rather ואתה תחזה, the content of Yisro's recommendation. The reason, Rav Shternbuch explains, is that we do not earn credit for simply saying לא טוב הדבר, for pointing out problems. Sitting around and complaining does not help. The real praise for Yisro is that he said ואתה תחזה, that he did not just criticize, but offered a solution, giving constructive advice.

It is easy to sit around a Shabbos table and point out problems that we see in the shul, in the school, in the community, and so on. But pointing out problems isn't enough – we need to get involved to help solve them. If somebody truly wishes to help, then instead

of just complaining, he should take the initiative, sit on committees, volunteer, brainstorm and work toward finding effective solutions. We make our mark not by complaining about problems, but by going out there and trying to solve them.

DVAR TORAH FOR THE SHABBOS DAY MEAL

Rejoicing For Each Other

When Yisro arrived at *Benei Yisrael's* camp at Mount Sinai, Moshe Rabbeinu told him about everything the nation had experienced, and all the miracles which Hashem had performed for them. Yisro exuberantly responded, – ברוך ה' אשר הציל אתכם מיד מצרים ומיד פרעה, "Blessed is God who has saved you from the hand of Pharaoh and the hand of Egypt" (18:10).

The Gemara in *Maseches Sanhedrin* (94a) comments: גנאי הוא למשה וששים ריבוא שלא אמרו ברוך עד שבא יתרו ואמר ברוך ה' – it is a mark of dishonor for Moshe and *Benei Yisrael* that nobody proclaimed ברוך ה' until Yisro came along and made this proclamation, praising Hashem for His miracles.

Surprisingly, *Chazal* here found fault in Moshe and *Benei Yisrael* for never having praised Hashem the way Yisro praised Him. We must wonder – did Moshe and *Benei Yisrael* not sing the beautiful אז ישיר song of praise after the miracle of the sea? Didn't they jubilantly thank and sing to Hashem for saving them? What was so special about Yisro's praise that was lacking in theirs?

Rav Shlomo of Radomsk, in *Tiferes Shlomo*, explains that the unique feature of Yisro's praise was that he praised Hashem for a miracle performed for somebody else. *Benei Yisrael* had sung praises after their own salvation, thanking Hashem for rescuing them. Yisro gave praise to Hashem for saving not him, but for saving *Benei Yisrael*. This is what made his praise so special, and so unique. As important as it is to feel

grateful for and appreciate all that Hashem does for us, it is a much higher level to feel gratitude for what He does for others, to rejoice in the blessings and successes of our fellow. This is what we learn from Yisro's reaction – the importance of celebrating the joys of other people.

The *Tiferes Shlomo* cites in this context the *pasuk* in Shir Hashirim (2:14), – השמעני את קולך כי קולך ערב, “Sound your voice, because your voice is pleasant.” Our prayers are especially precious and cherished by God when our voice is ערב – “pleasant.” The *Tiferes Shlomo* explains that this word is related to the word ערבות, which refers to a guarantor, someone who takes responsibility for his fellow. When someone guarantees a loan, he essentially makes someone else's needs his own needs that he is now committed to filling. When we take responsibility for other people, genuinely feeling their pain and celebrating their successes, then קולך ערב – our voices are sweet and pleasant, we add sweetness to the world, and our *tefilos* become especially valuable.

This is the great quality we learn from Yisro – the ability to experience other people's struggles as our own, and to celebrate other people's joys as though they are our own.

DVAR TORAH FOR SHALOSH SEUDOS

On the Wings of Eagles

Before *Matan Torah*, Hashem spoke to Moshe and instructed him to convey to *Benei Yisrael* the basic terms of the covenant into which they would now be entering. Hashem introduced His remarks by recalling the miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*:

אתם ראיתם אשר עשיתי למצרים, ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים ואביא אתכם אלי.

You saw what I did to Egypt, and that I carried you on the wings of eagles, and brought you to Me. (19:4)

Rashi explains the metaphor על כנפי נשרים (“on the wings of eagles”) to mean that God protected *Benei Yisrael* from the Egyptians the way an eagle protects its young. An eagle soars higher than other birds, and so it places its young on its wings, where they are safe, and if a hunter fires an arrow, it will pierce the body of the parent, instead of harming the young. Hashem protected *Am Yisrael* the same way, shielding them from the arrows fired by the Egyptian soldiers as they pursued them after they left Egypt.

Rav Shaul Alter *shelit”a*, the Gerrer Rosh Yeshiva, offered an additional explanation of this metaphor.

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Avoda Zara 3:1) relates that Alexander the Great flew to the heavens, riding on the back of an eagle while holding a stick with an animal

carcass in front of it. The eagle tried reaching for the carcass, flying higher and higher, until it reached outer space. Alexander looked down at the earth, and was unimpressed. It appeared to him as a tiny orb, and he felt he could just hold it in his hand. This is why statues of Alexander commonly depict him as holding a globe in his hand – because when he reached the heavens, he looked down on earth and saw it as a tiny, insignificant ball that he could just grab with his hand.

Of course, this experience should have had the precise opposite effect on Alexander. Flying into space ought to be humbling, as one catches a glimpse of the vastness of the universe and the smallness and powerlessness of man. However, in one sense, Alexander was correct – when we rise to the heavens, things which appear very large here on earth suddenly seem tiny. Many of us experience this awareness when we fly in airplanes. We look down at the buildings and structures which are grand and impressive when seen down here, but from the skies, they seem minuscule.

Rav Shaul Alter explained that this might be the meaning of the phrase ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים as part of God's introduction to *Matan Torah*. One of the purposes of the Torah is to lift us high into the heavens, as it were, to give us a more accurate perspective on the world and on life. Many things that would otherwise seem large and critically important become trivial and hardly worthy of attention when seen from the prism of the Torah. When we immerse ourselves in the Torah, we are able to perceive events and experiences in our life from a different perspective, such that they become less troubling and less deserving of our time and energy.

There is a concept called the “5-by-5 rule,” which says that anything which will not bother us in five years should not occupy our minds for more than five minutes now. Sometimes, upsetting things happen, and it is natural to feel troubled and frustrated. But if something happened that will not upset us in five years, then it is not worth our attention. It is only natural to keep it on our minds for five minutes – but not for any longer. Such matters are simply undeserving of our mental or emotional energy.

The Torah helps us develop this “5-by-5” perspective. When our priorities and concerns are molded by the Torah, then upsetting and frustrating situations become smaller and less significant. They weigh less on our minds and hearts, because we see them from “the wings of eagles,” from the perspective of the lofty ideals and values of the Torah, such that the day-to-day problems and frustrations become so much less important and so much easier to handle.