Points to Ponder

Yisro 5784

**וְאֵ֖ת שְׁנֵ֣י בָנֶ֑יהָ אֲשֶׁ֨ר שֵׁ֤ם הָֽאֶחָד֙ The name of the first was Gershom (18:3-4)** – Why is it so important to know the names of Moshe’s children NOW? **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide**  explains that Moshe was teaching us that after experiencing the great miracles – Yetzias Mitzrayim, Kriyas Yam Suf and the war with Amalek, Moshe didn’t forget the small miracles – that of the miracle of birth and the like. This is the intent of the phrase we say daily in davening – Al Neesecha Shb’Chol Yom Eemanu.

**הֱיֵ֧ה אַתָּ֣ה לָעָ֗ם**  **You should be for the nation in front of Hashem (18:19) – Rav Haim Sabato**  pointed out that there was a fundamental misunderstanding between Yisro and Moshe about Torah leadership. Yisro assumed that Torah leaders need to be images, who do not dwell on the day to day activities of the people. Moshe understood that to be a good leader, one must be able to judge an honest judgment – whether the cost was a dollar or a million. According to Moshe, Judaism is about using the day to day operations of life for Jewish betterment. Judgment allows Tzedek to reign tall and proud and be Mikadeish Shem Shomayim.  It is no less important than prophesy whose goal, too, is to bring the people closer to Hashem.

**וַיְשַׁלַּ֥ח משֶׁ֖ה אֶת־חֹֽתְנ֑וֹ Moshe sent his father in law (18:27) - Yakut Shimoni** noted that Moshe knew Hashem didn’t think it right that the Simcha of מתן תורה be shared between those who worked for it and those who didn’t. Hence Moshe sent Yisro home prior to the event. **Rav Aharon Kotler** was bewildered by the comment as Yisro DID sacrifice a lot for his belief. Why would he be considered a foreigner undeserving of being at the מתן תורה celebration? Rav Aharon answered that since the Jewish people did overcome so much more, they had attained a higher level of spirituality and thus his Simcha and theirs would not match. Hence Moshe sent Yisro on his way.(A similar thought was expressed by **Rav Chaim Pinchas Sheinberg** who noted that Yisro didn’t have the full Simcha to appreciate מתן תורה hence he was sent on from it).

**וַיִּתְיַצְּב֖וּ בְּתַחְתִּ֥ית הָהָֽר** **They stood at the base of the mountain (19:17)** – The Gemara (Shabbos 88) notes that this teaches us that Hashem lifted the mountain on top of the people and told them if they accept the Torah great but if not THERE they will be buried. The commentaries note that if the mountain was on top of them already, why did He not say, HERE you will be buried**? Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz**  explained that there is a valuable lesson here – often in life people get busy. They work to delay their own spiritual growth until they “get around to it.” Hashem tells them if you do not change your priorities, waiting to get “There” will bury you. When it comes to spiritual growth we do not deal with eventualities…we deal with now.

**אָֽנֹכִ֨י I am Hashem your God who has taken you out of Mitzrayim**– A famous midrash replayed many times at Chumash plays throughout the Torah world reminds us that prior to the Jews receiving the Torah, Hashem went to each nation to see if they would accept the Torah. Edom refused because they couldn’t accept the prohibition against murder, Yishmael couldn’t accept the prohibition against stealing. What was the point if Hashem came to the Jews and didn’t challenge them? **Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski**  quotes Rav Yitzchak Meir of Gur who noted that the commandments selected for each of the nations were directed to challenge their very natures – to see if the nation would be willing to subvert its very psychological drive in order to follow the word of Hashem. For Edomites, it is savagery, for Yishmaelim it is theft.  For Jews it is skepticism  -- hence their challenge came in the first declaration, Anochee Hashem.

**לְקַדְּשׁ֗וֹ To sanctify it (20:8)** – According to **Maggid Mishna** the Mitzva of kiddush is to create the day’s Kedusha through the pronouncing of Kiddush which means that although Shabbos is inherently Kadosh, there is value in making Kiddush so that the Kedusha occurs through the Jewish people – human involvement as well. **Rav Schachter** would remind us regularly that therefore one should make Kiddush as soon as possible on Friday night in order to spend as much of Shabbos in as much Kedusha as possible.

**לֹ֥א תַחְמֹ֖ד Do not covet (20:14) - Ibn Ezra** notes that while it seems hard not to covet, when one knows his boundaries he doesn’t seek that which is not his. **Rav Refoel Shmuellevitz quoted Rav Aizik Sher** who explained that while to Ibn Ezra it was unthinkable for the outsider to covet the princess and this is the לא תחמוד challenge, in Slabodka they explained that a prince doesn’t covet a commoner as it is beneath him. All of the Jewish people are created in Hashem’s image and therefore coveting is beneath them.

**וְלֹא־תַֽעֲלֶ֥ה בְמַֽעֲלֹ֖ת עַל־מִזְבְּחִ֑י And do not ascend my Mizbeiach via steps (20:23) – Rashi** explained that if you were to do so, you might come to demonstrate a belittling of the Mizbeiach as the laws of Tzniyus would be compromised. Yet, one needs to wonder how a Kohein or a Kohein Gadol ascending the Mizbeiach AT A TIME OF AVODA would behave in a manner that could even appear to be belittling? **Rav Yaakov Moshe Lessin**  explained that even when we are totally focused on the mission of Hashem, we need to be careful not to let anything else disturb our mission. At these special moments, even the slightest change has the ability to set us off on the wrong course.

**Haftara:**

**: אֶת־מִֽי־אֶשְׁלַ֖ח וּמִ֣י יֵֽלֶךְ־לָ֑נוּ וָֽאֹמַ֖ר הִֽנְנִ֥י שְׁלָחֵֽנִי Whom will I send..and I said Heneni send me (Yeshayahu 6:8)** - In his first Nevuah for the people Yeshayahu accepts the call to serve enthusiastically. **Rav Schwab**  added that he was rewarded for accepting the call in spite of the people’s rejection of the word of Hashem and those who brought it to the people, by being the Novi who received most of the Nevuah of Nechama -- some of them doubled --- because Hashem appreciated his enthusiasm on behalf of the role to be the bridge between Hashem and his people.