Points to Ponder

Yisro 5780

**וַיִּשְׁמַ֞ע יִתְר֨וֹ  Yisro heard (18:1) – Rashi** famously asks the question what Yisro heard that inspired him to come join Moshe and Bnei Yisrael? Rashi notes that he heard about the splitting of Yam Suf and the war with Amalek. But why did that make him “come”? **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl.** explains that Yisro took a valuable lesson from these 2 specific examples. In both of these examples, Bnei Yisrael were held responsible to do their part and he would do the rest. Even if a person thinks s/he is not worthy of doing, Hashem thinks s/he is, and each of us needs to rise to the occasion and do. Hence, Yisro did his part too – and he came.

**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 ztl.** 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.

**שׂ֣נְאֵי בָ֑צַע People who hate bribes (18:21)** – If they cannot take bribes, why must they HATE the bribe? **Rav Elchanan Wasserman ztl. HyD** explains that even if the person merely likes money – even if he stays away from it, the person will become swayed and his judgement tainted. Thus, hating bribes allows his mind to focus on that which is important – justice.

**וִֽהְיִ֨יתֶם לִ֤י סְגֻלָּה֙ And you will be special to me (19:5)** – Segulos are often used as a means of healing. But what is the difference between a Segulah and a Refuah? **Or HaChaim** explains that Refuah can be explained medically or biochemically. A segulah cannot be explained by the normal knowledge of known science. **Rav Elimelech Biderman Shlita** adds that this is the intent of the Possuk here too. Hashem will love and cherish us even when it doesn’t make sense. Even if we sin, Hashem doesn’t merely depart us. He adds that Segulah comes from the word Segel – like the vowel Segol. Just as whatever position you rotate the Segol, it remains Segol, Hashem promises that no matter whether we are on the up and up or falling, we too, will always be precious to Hashem.

**אָֽנֹכִ֨י I am Hashem (20:2)** – The **Rambam** counts this as a Mitzva by itself. **Ramban** agrees but in his commentary he defends **the Behag** who does not include this commentary as one of the 613 Mitzvos as the Behag saw this as an introduction to all of the other Mitzvos. After all, if you do not believe in Hashem then you cannot do all of his laws. There would be no point. So why should it be its own Mitzva**? Rav Elchonon Wasserman ztl. HyD** noted that there are certain things that are in the forefront of our minds and others not as easily accessible. The Mitzva of Anochee Hashem is to have this idea in the forefront of our minds. **Rav Schachter Shlita** would often point out that this is the meaning of Vayaminu B’Hashem U’B’Moshe Avdo – that in the same way that you see Moshe in front of you and believe in him all of the time, that is the way we are to believe in Hashem.

**וְכֹ֖ל אֲשֶׁ֥ר לְרֵעֶֽךָ Do not covet everything that belongs to your neighbor(20:14) – The Givilei Eish** notes that when someone thinks of that which belongs to his neighbor he thinks that he is entitled to something that belongs to the other person. However, the problem is that when you want something that belongs to your neighbor, you get EVERYTHING – including that which you might not want. Better off to stick with what is yours.

**וְלֹא־תַֽעֲלֶ֥ה בְמַֽעֲלֹ֖ת עַל־מִזְבְּחִ֑י And do not ascend my Mizbeiach via steps (20:23) – Rashi** explains 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 ztl** 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 as the ability to set us off on the wrong course.

**Haftara: שְׂרָפִ֨ים עֹֽמְדִ֚ים מִמַּ֙עַל֙ ל֔וֹ  The Serafim were above him (Yeshayahu 6:2) – Rav Mordechai Breuer** notes that there is a strong comparison between the Nevuah of Yeshayahu here and that of Michyahu Ben Yimla (Melachim I: 22). In both prophesies, Hashem is described as sitting on a heavenly throne with His angels standing above at the ready to serve Him. However, in the current Haftara, Yeshayahu is ultimately invited to join in with the angels in their service of Hashem. Rav Breuer adds that when one is capable of declaring and making Hashem sovereign over him, then he too, is granted the opportunity to join in with the angels in praising and serving Hashem.