Points to Ponder

Yisro 5781

**וַיִּשְׁמַ֞ע יִתְר֨וֹ Yisro heard (18:1) - Rashi** explained that Yisro heard about Kriyas Yam Suf and the war against Amalek. Why were these 2 fundamental? And why the war of Amalek and not the win against Amalek? **Chasam Sofer** answered that both issues were about Bechira. The message was that if Hashem could change nature for Kriyas Yam Suf, then He could have also stopped the war with amalek. That there was a war was a message that man has Bechira and chooses to follow Hashem.

**אֲשֶׁ֨ר שֵׁ֤ם הָֽאֶחָד֙ גֵּֽרְשֹׁ֔ם Whose first son’s name was Gershom (18:3)** - Why do we mention the names of the sons of Moshe now? **Rav Simcha Zissel Broide ztl.** explained that after the great miracles Moshe Rabbeinu did not forget the specific, personal miracles that happened to him.

**שׂ֣נְאֵי בָ֑צַע Men of truth who hate bribes (18:21)** - We know that judges cannot accept bribes but why do they need to hate it? **Rav Elchanan Wasserman Hy”D** explained that if he didn’t hate bribes he is a Nogeiya but more so, his intelligence is corrupted until you cannot see straight anymore. Bribery needs to be hated if a judge wants to be honest.

**וְהָיָ֞ה כָּל־הַדָּבָ֤ר הַגָּדֹל֙ יָבִ֣יאוּ אֵלֶ֔יךָ The big things will be brought to Moshe (18:22)** - What is the difference between a “big thing” and a “little thing”? **Rav Schachter Shlita** noted that it is not the amount of the issue but rather who the defendant is. The Gemara explains that when dealing with dinei nefashos of a kohen gadol or melech, you need Moshe or Sanhedrin of 71. How about in regard to the number of Dayanim needed for the animal who went on to Har Sinai? The Gemara Sanhedrin has a safek whether Shor Sinai required 23 like a Shor Haniskal. Rishonim are bothered why we care about what happened -- מאי דהוה הוה. That’s a waste of time. Ancient history. **Rambam** doesn’t even quote the din. **The Brisker Rav** inferredthat it needed 23 since he says stam that דיני נפשות של שור requires 23.

**וַיִּֽחַן־שָׁ֥ם יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל נֶ֥גֶד הָהָֽר And Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain [Sinai] (19:2) -  Rashi** points out that the Hebrew word for encamped is *vayichan*, he camped, rather than *vayachanu*, they camped because of the unity that they experienced at that moment. **Rav Dr. Abraham J. Twerski ztl.** explained that the Torah was given to each individual, and every person is required to fulfill the 613 mitzvot. It is obvious that technically this is impossible. There are some mitzvot whose performance is restricted to Kohanim (priests), which Yisrael cannot perform. A person whose first born child is a girl cannot fulfill the mitzvah of *pidyon haben* (redemption of the firstborn son). Mitzvot that apply to judges do not apply to lay people. How can any single person fulfill all 613 mitzvot?  Torah scholars have provided the answer. When a person puts on the tefillin (phylacteries) on his arm and head, it is not just the arm and head that have the mitzvah, but the whole person. Similarly, when people are united, they are as one, and a mitzvah performed by one person is shared by those with whom one is united. How tragic that we have allowed ourselves to be divisive. Fragmentation not only weakens our nation, but deprives a person of acquiring the merit of those mitzvot which he is unable to perform. Every human trait may have positive applications, even something as repulsive as selfishness. We should realize that eliminating the divisiveness that reigns among us is not merely altruistic. It is of inestimable personal benefit.

**הִנֵּ֨ה אָֽנֹכִ֜י בָּ֣א אֵלֶ֘יךָ֘ בְּעַ֣ב הֶֽעָנָן֒ Behold I am coming to you in the cover of the cloud so that the nation shall hear me when I speak (19:9)** - What is the connection between the thickness of the cloud and the nation listening? **Rav Ovadiah Yosef ztl.** explained that a person who worked in one sense, doesn’t usually become sensitive in other areas. When Bnei Yisrael saw things from a Heavenly perspective their other senses were dulled. Therefore the thickness of the cloud was provided so that the other senses could be restored so that the people would remain connected to Moshe forever.

**בִּמְשֹׁךְ֙ הַיֹּבֵ֔ל הֵ֖מָּה יַֽעֲל֥וּ בָהָֽר: These are the things that you should say to Bnei Yisrael(19:3)** - **Rashi** says Moshe was told to share these words and nothing more. Why? **Rav Aizik Sher ztl.** explained that this is a condition of doing Mitzvos -- that we are WORTHY of doing Mitzvos and standing in front of Hashem. It needs no further explanation.

**וְכָל־הָעָם֩ רֹאִ֨ים אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹ֜ת And the entire nation saw the voices (20:15)** - The **Rambam** notes that Moshe was unique among the Neviim insofar as he had a clear Nevuah and saw things without Mashal. Based on our Possuk, Bnei Yisrael had achieved the Nevuah level of Moshe Rabbeinu. How does this make sense if the Nevuah of Moshe was supposed to be unique? **Rav Dovid Soloveitchik ztl.** explained that Moshe’s Nevuah brought forth Torah as did Bilaam’s as opposed to all other Neviim. As far as Matan Torah was concerned, it was experienced by Bnei Yisrael as Torah only because of Moshe Rabbeinu.

**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 ztl.** 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.