Points to Ponder

Yisro 5783

**וַיִּשְׁמַ֞ע יִתְר֨וֹ Yisro heard (18:1) - Rashi** notes that he heard about the splitting of the sea and the battle with Amalek. The question arises as to what the big deal was, if after all, the Torah tells us that all the nations heard. Yisro was part of all the nations and therefore it seems obvious that he heard. **Rav Yechiel Yitzchock Perr** explained that in Yiddish there are 2 terms — הערין and דהערין . Both refer to listening. But while the former involves a passive process that is physical in nature, s/he engaging in דהערין is actively seeking to not only listen but draw implications for his or her own life betterment as well. While the nations heard, they didn’t .דהער Only Yisro did that — and he came.

**וַיְשַׁלַּ֥ח משֶׁ֖ה אֶת־חֹֽתְנ֑וֹ Moshe sent his father in law (18:27) - Yakut Shimoni** notes 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.)

**וַיִּֽחַן־שָׁ֥ם יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל נֶ֥גֶד הָהָֽר The people camped opposite the mountain (19:2) - Rashi** notes that they did so as a united nation in body and spirit. **Rav Nossan Tzvi Finkel** explained that the Torah needed us to have this description because without it there is no קבלת התורה. Many think that they can unify spirit internally בין אדם למקום but exist without בין אדם לחברו but this is not correct. Without unity of person and spirit, קבלת התורה is not going to be fully effective.

**רֵ֖ד הָעֵ֣ד בָּעָ֑ם פֶּן־יֶֽהֶרְס֤וּ אֶל־ה֙' לִרְא֔וֹת Lest the people get too close to see (19:21) - Rav Wolbe** noted that it is interesting that the entire preparation was about setting boundaries lest people get too close but the opposite is was what happened — that the people ran back AWAY (see Shabbos 88b). Rav Wolbe explained that clearly Hashem expected a very different מתן תורה where the people were pushing closer. Thus, it seems that their actions were motivated more by fear than love. This bothered Moshe who was consoled by Hashem that הטיבו אשר דברו.

**זָכוֹר֩ אֶת־י֨וֹם הַשַּׁבָּ֜ת לְקַדְּשׁ֗וֹ Remember the Shabbos to sanctify it (20:8) - Midrash Tanchuma (Parshas Noach)** notes that the idea of Shabbos candles comes from the Torah but the proof text is from ישיעהו. How does that make sense? **Rav Menachem Genack** would remind us that **Rav Soloveitchik** noted that the מצוה of כבוד שבת  (of which Shabbos candles fit) is the explanation of the נביאים to a מצוה in the  Torah namely how to fulfill the מצות התורה of זכור. Rav Genack added that candles provide light as the midrash there explains, in order to dispel the darkness of גיהנום . Hence שבת is מעין עולם הבא and is properly enlightened through תורה study on שבת

**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.

**Haftara**

**אֽוֹי־לִ֣י כִֽי־נִדְמֵ֗יתִי Thus said I, Woe is me! For I am ruined (Yeshayahu 6:5)** – What does Nidmeisi mean? **Rashi & Redak** understand it in the sense of death and ruin. **Mahari Kra** understands it in the sense of silence. **Rav Moshe Lichtenstein** suggests that it is to be understood in the sense of imagination (dimayon) using the imaginative faculty for the sake of prophecy. Yeshayahu could not fathom how he could reconcile being human and coming into contact with the exalted and divine. He speaks of uncleanness but how can such a creature, unclean as it is, expose himself to the word of God and bear it? The tension between man as a material creature and man as recipient of the spiritual word of God which is beyond the world of matter is what stands behind Yeshayahu's astonishment regarding the possibility of prophecy for man, owing to his being of unclean lips by very definition.