

Points to Ponder

Yisro 5775

After she was sent away (18:2) – The **Mechilta** identifies that Tziporah was either sent away with word or with actual divorce. Why would she return prior to Matan Torah? **Rav Shmuel Eliyahu Shlita** compares the situation to that of the Kohein Gadol on Yom Kippur who also needed to be married – in that the dual view – man and woman – is the best way to relate to Hashem. As Matan Torah was a revelation similar to the Yom Kippur experience, it would be most complete with Moshe married at the time.

And Moshe went out to greet his father in law (18:7) - **Rabbi Berel Wein Shlita** asks why it was so important to the Torah to describe this particular interaction prior to Matan Torah? Why the stress on Yisro? Rabbi Wein answers that the Yisro episode teaches us the importance of Derech Eretz Kadma L'Torah – that basic civility is a bedrock upon which the Torah is given. We received the Torah because we had the Derech Eretz to deserve it. We need to preserve the Derech Eretz more so now as a result of having received it.

And Moshe told his father in law all about what Hashem did (18:8) – **Rashi** tells us that Moshe told all of this to Yisro in order to be Mikarev him to Torah. However, don't we usually try to DISCOURAGE Geirim? Why would Moshe encourage Yisro when this is against the Halacha? **Rav Shteinman Shlita** suggests that the whole reason we try to discourage the Ger is because we suspect him of ulterior motives and a lack of sincerity in his Geirus. However, when the conversion candidate's Mesirus Nefesh is so clear in that he places himself into Sakana to become a Ger, one need not shoo him away – in fact, one should offer the encouragement in the process – as Moshe did.

All that Hashem declared we will do (19:8) – There is a famous **Midrash** that discusses how Hashem offered the Torah to each one of the nations and when each asked what the Torah stated, was offered a description that made accepting the Torah undesirable to that nation. The Jewish nation responded simply—“Naaseh V'Nishma. **Rav Yitzchak Meir of Ger** asked why the Jews were not given a reason not to accept the Torah in the same way that the other nations were. He answers that each nation was challenged with the very idea or concept that they had at their core. The Torah was supposed to be able to tame that core. Jewish challenge is in its skepticism. By having the Jews accept fully, it was the ultimate challenge to our drive that stands in the way of our Torah observance and life success.

And they stood at the bottom of the mountain (19:17) – The Gemara (Shabbos 88a) reminds us that Hashem told the Jews that if they accept the Torah all will be good but if not, Sham – there will be their burial place. **Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz ztl.** asks why the word Sham – there – is used if the more correct term would have been “Here”? He answers that in life, if we accept things NOW then we tend to stick to them – but if not, we get buried under the “Round to it” syndrome – wherein we declare “when I get there, I'll do it.” Hashem warned Moshe to tell the people that if they wait – they will not succeed.

You speak to us and we will listen and Hashem shouldn't speak to us lest we die (20:16) – **Rav Yissochar Dov of Belz** was once asked if there is temporary death in light of the famous story of Rabba and Rav Zeira (Megillah 7b)? In other words, did Rav Zeira's wife need to remarry him after he was brought back after the episode? The Rebbe answered that in light of the Gemara which suggests that Bnei Yisrael's souls departed at the time of Matan Torah and yet we do not find them having to remarry. Ergo, a temporary death is likely not death in Halacha.

In order that the fear will be on your faces so that you will not sin (20:17) – The gemara identifies the Jewish people as Rachmanim Baishanim Gomlei Chassadim. The Gemara notes that one who does not have these middos might not be Jewish. Why? The Gemara explains that Maamad Har Sinai is the source for the Middah of Busha and the other middos must also come from there. **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained that this is why we say Eilu Kirvanu Lifnei Har Sinai V'Lo Nasan Lanu Es HaTorah Dayeinu. The Sinaitic revelation alone accomplished the experience of what being a Tzelem Elokim is and what we must do to be able to fulfill V'Halachta B'Drachav.

Haftorah: Woe onto me for I have been impure and I have impure lips (Yeshiyahu 6:5) – **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** asks what the tale of woe was about and why would the Malach's use of coal on Yeshiyahu's lips heal him? He answers that Yeshiyahu was punished for speaking badly about Am Yisroel. He was cleansed through a Ritzpa because unlike other coals, a Ritzpa continues to glow on the inside long after the outside of the coal has burned out. Lashon HaRa too, continues to burn long after the outside act has been done.