

Yad Avraham Institute
Weekly Torah Commentaries Series
Portion of Yisro

February 4, 2010

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

<i>Inside This Week's Edition</i>	<u>Page</u>
<i>1. Moshe's Qualification as the Redeemer</i>	2
<i>2. Yisro's Extraordinary Quality</i>	3
<i>3. The Need to Overcome Spiritual Impediments</i>	4
<i>4. Dason And Aviram, the Precipitators of the Ultimate</i>	4
<i>5. Appreciating Something Within A Proper Context</i>	5

About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

If you would like to receive this Weekly Torah Commentary Series by email

Please call 212-371-9555 or email:

info@yadavraham.org

TUNE IN TO OUR LIVE VIDEO BROADCAST OF CLASSES

And over

60,000 online classes 24 hours a day

Yisro

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita

Dean

1. Moshe's Qualification as the Redeemer

The Torah tells us that when the Jewish people were traveling away from Egypt, G'd said to Moshe to tell them to travel back towards the approaching Egyptian army in order to give them the impression that they were stranded in the desert. Although traveling in the direction of the enemy should be considered frightening and irresponsible, they did not hesitate to follow the dictate of Moshe. Rashi cites Chazal who explain, "This is to demonstrate the praiseworthiness of the Jewish people that they listened to Moshe. They could have said, 'How could we approach those who are pursuing us? We should flee from them.' However, the Jewish people said, 'We only have the dictate of Ben Amram (Moshe).'" One would think that referring to Moshe, who was G'd's designated redeemer as 'Ben Amram (the son of Amram)' would be considered a disrespect. They should have referred to him as "Moshe." Why did they not do so if this is being discussed within a praiseworthy context?

The Torah tells us that Moshe assumed his name as a result of Pharaoh's daughter drawing him out of the Nile. The name "Moshe" alludes to the fact that he was "drawn out of the of the water" as stated by the verse. The Midrash tells us that Moshe was given seven names (Tov, Tuvia, Tuvi, etc.) by his parents Amram and Yocheved. Amram, the grandson of Levy was the leading Sage of his generation and a man who had not sinned in his life. Yocheved, the daughter of Levy, was a woman who risked her life as a midwife because she had feared G'd. Kesav Sofer asks, "Due to the greatness of Moshe's parents, why would the Torah refer to him by the name given by the daughter of Pharaoh and not by one of the names given to him by his parents?"

Kesav Sofer answers that the Torah refers to Moshe as the "most humble man who ever walked the face of the earth." This is the all-encompassing characteristic, that was the basis for Moshe's greatness. One could become humble in one of two ways: either through experiencing hardships and difficulties in life, which causes one through one's personal circumstances to

assume naturally a posture of humility, or through recognizing G'd's omnipotence. The Torah wants to give us an appreciation for Moshe's greatness by referring to him by the name that was given to him by the Egyptian princess, the daughter of Pharaoh. Moshe was the adopted grandchild of Pharaoh and was raised as a prince in the palace with all of its opulence and pomp. Despite his upbringing as royalty and being treated with reverence and respect because of his status in society, he was nevertheless the most humble man who ever lived. The name Moshe is a testament to the person, whose level of humility was unheard of.

Sforno explains why Pharaoh's daughter had used the circumstance of Moshe being drawn from the water as a basis for his name. He explains, "The daughter of Pharaoh called him 'Moshe' which alludes to the fact that he was destined to help others. Because he was miraculously drawn from the water and did not drown, it was clear that it was G'd's decree that he should live to save others." According to Sforno's interpretation, we are able to say that the reason the Torah chooses the name "Moshe" rather than the names given to him by his parents in order to continuously communicate the essence of Moshe. He did not for a moment live for himself, but rather for G'd and the Jewish people.

If the Jewish people had referred to Moshe as 'Moshe' and not 'the son of Amram' it could be understood that they were attributing all of the revealed miracles that had taken place to Moshe's unique relationship with G'd and not to G'd Himself. If they had referred to Moshe with his own unique identity it would have been an indication that their redemption was due to the dimension of Moshe as a person, which would have caused them to be reluctant and not follow his charge. However, by referring to him as 'the son of Amram,' which is a minimization of Moshe (as a person), it communicates that the basis for their lack of fear was their own negation to G'd Himself, rather than a mortal. It was because they had exceptional faith in G'd that they traveled back in the direction of the enemy and not because they were following the dictate of their leader "Moshe."

2. *Yisro's Extraordinary Quality*

The Torah states, "**Yisro, the Priest of Midian, the father-in-law of Moshe, heard everything that G'd said to Moshe and to Israel...**" Rashi cites Chazal, "What did Yisro hear that caused him to abandon all of his glory and join the Jewish people into the desert? The splitting of the Sea and the battle against the Amalekites." Upon hearing about these miracles, Yisro was moved to the point that the ultimate glory was to become part of the Jewish people. Although the entire world was aware of the splitting of the Sea, as Chazal tell us that every body of water (including the water in a vessel) split at the time of the splitting of the Sea, only Yisro was compelled by what he had heard.

The Midrash states, "There are those who hear and are diminished by it, while there are those who hear and are the beneficiaries of what they heard. Yoash, who was a king, heard and was diminished. The nations heard about the splitting of the sea and rather than glorifying G'd they were pained and distraught by the destruction of Egypt. In contrast, Yisro heard and benefited. Despite the fact that he was a high priest of idolatry, he abandoned all that he had accomplished in his life and attached himself to Moshe and entered under the wings of the Divine Presence. He merited to contribute to the portion of judges that is in the Torah. As we find, he delineated to Moshe the criteria to chose a qualified judge." To what do we attribute Yisro's profound perception of truth?

Avraham, our Patriarch, was unique and special because of his all-consuming quest for truth. Despite the fact that he was born into a pagan world that was immersed in idolatry, he came upon the fact that there was One Supreme Being. Because of this level of unswerving commitment to his belief, he is referred to as "Avraham Ha'Ivry (Avraham from the other side of the river)." Chazal tell us that this appellation quantifies Avraham as the person who was willing to stand up and sacrifice for his belief regardless of the opposition of the world and being alone. Yisro shared a similar quality.

Chazal tell us that Yisro had worshiped every deity in existence and ultimately concluded that they were all false and there was only One G'd. Despite the ridicule of his community, Yisro was not deterred or discouraged. Although Yisro had become a pariah in his community, he remained strong and committed to his belief in monotheism. Through the process of searching for truth, he had honed and perfected his perception of truth. Thus, when he had heard of the events of the splitting of the sea

and the war against the Amalekites, he chose to become part of the Jewish people regardless of the material cost.

The Torah states, "**The priest of Midian (Yisro) had seven daughters; they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's sheep. The shepherds came and drove them away. Moshe got up and saved them and watered their sheep. They came to Reuel (Yisro) their father. He said, 'How could you come so quickly today?' They replied, 'An Egyptian man saved us from the shepherds, and he even drew water for us and watered the sheep.' He said to his daughters, 'Then where is he? Why did you leave the man? Summon him and let him eat bread!'**" Rashi cites Chazal who explain that when Yisro had said, "let him eat bread" he was alluding to the fact that Moshe should be considered as a potential husband for one of his daughters. How was Yisro able to evaluate and perceive Moshe as something exceptional and thus consider him to be a perspective husband for one of his daughters?

Yisro, the sheik of Midian, was not a person of ordinary ability. He was an individual who was astute and had a profound ability to understand truth. He was thus able to perceive things as they truly were. In fact, Yisro initially was one of the three advisers to Pharaoh, who was the monarch of the most advanced society in the world. This tells us that he was uniquely astute and had profound abilities that allowed him to be sensitive to many events and issues that were not evident to most people.

Although Moshe had put his life in jeopardy when he assisted Yisro's daughters to fight off their attackers, he nevertheless did not seek any remuneration or acknowledgement. This quality of this level of behavior was out of the ordinary. Under normal circumstances, an individual who offered this degree of assistance would have returned together with the women who he had assisted so that the family would acknowledge and appreciate what he had done for them. Yisro, recognizing the unequalled humility of the rescuer of his daughters caused him to question, "why did you not bring him back?" He *was* a qualified husband for one of his daughters. Yisro was able to recognize that Moshe was special because he himself was special.

Yisro heard and benefited because he was willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of truth.

3. The Need to Overcome Spiritual Impediments

The Torah states, **“In the third month from the Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt, on this day they arrived at the desert of Sinai (to receive the Torah).”** The Midrash asks, “Why was the Torah not given to the Jewish people immediately after being redeemed from Egypt? G’d had said, **‘I will take this people out to serve G’d on this mountain...’** Seemingly, after the Jewish people left Egypt they should have received the Torah immediately. Reb Yehudah Bar Shalom answers this question with an analogy. It is similar to a prince who was recovering from an illness. His father had said, ‘Let him fully recover before he resumes his regular Torah studies.’ After the Jewish people had left Egypt, they were blemished from their bondage. G’d had said, ‘It will take time for them to heal from their illness. Then they will receive the Torah.’”

The Torah tells us that after the splitting of the Sea and seeing the remains of the Egyptians on the seashore, **“They believed in G’d and Moshe his servant.”** If the Torah attests to the fact that they had reached this extraordinary level of belief after the splitting of the Sea, it is inferred that that prior to that moment, although they had witnessed the ten plagues and the miracles upon leaving Egypt they were not yet at this level of belief. They needed to witness and be exposed to many more miracles. Even after witnessing the closing of the Sea and the singing the praises of G’d, the Jewish people complained and quarreled with Moshe at Marah. They were given the Manna, which was in its essence the food of angels in order to spiritualize them prior to Sinai. As Chazal tell us, “The Torah was given to those who had partaken of the Manna.”

After their departure from Egypt, the Jewish people were continuously exposed to miracles and spirituality in order to purge them from the impurity that they had absorbed in Egypt. It was only after they were sufficiently purified and had overcome all of their spiritual impediments, they had the ability to internalize their experiences and were thus able to declare at Sinai, “Naaseh V’Nishma- we will do and we will listen.”

The Jewish people being spiritually handicapped from their 210-year exposure to the spiritual impurities of Egypt were not initially ready to receive the Torah immediately after their redemption. Every day that the Jewish people were out of Egypt, they ascended to another level of spiritual purity. When they had left Egypt that

were at the 49th level of spiritual impurity, which was the point of spiritual extinction. They needed to extricate and elevate themselves from an impure state to a pure state over the following 49-day period. After they had reached the pinnacle of spirituality, they were able to be taken as G’d’s people by the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

4. Dason And Aviram, the Precipitators of the Ultimate

The Torah tells us that Dason and Aviram had informed on Moshe to Pharaoh when he had killed an Egyptian. Moshe was subsequently condemned by Pharaoh to be put to death; however, he miraculously fled Egypt before the sentence was carried out. He had become a fugitive in Midian for many years. Moshe had witnessed an Egyptian beating a Jew after he had raped the Jew’s wife. Moshe was thus compelled to take the appropriate action, which was to kill the Egyptian. Although Moshe’s action was unequivocally justified and correct, Dason and Aviram, his fellow Jews informed on him to Pharaoh. Why did they do so?

Although Moshe, was a Jew he had a special royal status in Egypt because he was the adopted grandson of Pharaoh. Due to his lofty position within the Egyptian hierarchy, Moshe could have been a powerful advocate for his Jewish brethren. Regardless of this, Dason and Aviram informed on him and caused him to flee for his life. They did this because of their evil, that was driven by their ego and self-interest. Because of their wealth and financial standing they had a special relationship with Pharaoh. It was because of this that they were able to gain Pharaoh’s attention in order to inform on Moshe. Regardless of the catastrophic consequences to the Jewish people, they could not tolerate any Jew to be more intimate with Pharaoh than themselves. They thus informed on him.

After Moshe returned to Egypt as the Redeemer from being in exile for many years in Midian, Dason and Aviram publicly rebuked Moshe by saying, **“May Hashem look upon you and judge you...”** As a result of their harshness, he approached G’d and expressed himself in an inappropriate manner saying, **“My Lord, why have You done evil to this people, why have You sent me?”** As a result of Moshe’s statement, he was denied entry into the Promised Land.

Dason and Aviram continuously challenged Moshe’s authority in the desert and influenced the Jewish people to complain and rebel against the Word of G’d. Despite their level of evil and intolerable behavior, Moshe tolerated Dason and Aviram. He did not ostracize them or

punish them in any way, regardless of their continuous incitement

The Midrash cites a verse from Ecclesiastes, "King Solomon writes, 'G'd favors the pursued.' ... We find Abel was pursued by Cain. As a result of being the pursued, G'd favored the offering of Abel and rejected the offering that was brought by Cain. Noah was pursued by the members of his generation. As a result of this, Noah was favored by G'd as it states, '**Noach found favor in the eyes of G'd.**' Avraham was pursued by Nimrod. Avraham was favored by G'd as it states, '**You are Hashem, G'd who has chosen Avraham and has taken him out of the fiery kiln...**' Yitzchak was pursued by the Philistines, Yaakov was pursued by Esav, Yosef was pursued by his brothers, Moshe was pursued by Pharaoh, and the Jewish people are pursued by the nations of the world...In all these situations G'd favors the pursued...Therefore, Moshe was His Chosen."

Why does G'd favor the pursued? When one is in a pursued state one is unceasingly and relentlessly hounded by his pursuer. He understands that he has no root of escape or any way to extricate himself from his pursuer. Realizing his predicament, he turns to G'd with a depth of understanding and an internalization of his reality. Only G'd could help him. This internalization of this reality establishes a special and unique relationship between the individual (the pursued) and G'd. His untenable circumstance has brought him to understand that all existence is determined by G'd Himself. This is the basis for G'd to favor the pursued. Moshe, achieving the distinction of being the chosen of G'd, the individual who had the most intimate relationship with G'd and thus allowing him to be the conduit to bring the Torah to the Jewish people, only came about as a result of him being pursued by Pharaoh. Although the intent of Dason and Aviram was evil and sinister, they were the cause of Pharaoh's pursuit of Moshe. They had set in motion all that was necessary to ultimately lead to the giving of the Torah at Sinai, thus fulfilling the purpose of existence. As Chazal tell us, "The world was created for the sake of the Torah and the Jewish people to receive it." Moshe, understanding this felt that he owed an unlimited debt of gratitude to Dason and Aviram regardless of their evil intentions.

The concept of "*Gamzu la'tova* – it is all for the best" teaches us that what ever happens, although we may not understand its innate value, is in our best interests. One's predicament may appear to be dire or tragic and truly untenable because he is unaware of G'd's plan. Nevertheless one must perceive it as positive because it

will ultimately bring about the best result as G'd had intended it to.

5. Appreciating Something Within A Proper Context

The Torah tells us that after Yisro had gone into the desert to become part of the Jewish people, Moshe had shared with him in detail, every aspect of what had transpired at the time of the exodus -the destruction of the Egyptian army and how the Jewish people were miraculously saved. The Torah states, "**Yisro rejoiced over all the good that Hashem had done for Israel, that He had rescued them from the land of Egypt...**" It would seem that Yisro's rejoicing over the good that G'd had provided for the Jewish people was the proper response to the understanding of what had taken place. However, Sforno explains that the Torah is communicating something that is slightly critical of Yisro's response.

Sforno states, "When Yisro had heard how the Egyptians were destroyed, he did not rejoice over their destruction. He did not behave as one who is zealous over the honor that is afforded to his Maker as a result of the destruction of His enemies." Upon hearing of the destruction of the Egyptians, who defied G'd, Yisro should have rejoiced that this insolent and evil entity had been vanquished. However, he did not rejoice over this fact, but rather, over the good that was afforded to the Jewish people. A person who lives only for G'd's Glory would have rejoiced over the destruction of evil rather than focusing on the beneficiary.

Every day we recite in the Amidah (in the blessing against the heretics), "And for the slanderers let there be no hope; and may all wickedness perish in an instant; and may all Your enemies be cut down speedily..." We supplicate G'd that His enemies should be destroyed and that evil should come to an end. One would think that since requests of the Amidah are of personal nature, they should focus on the destruction of our enemies because of our own issues. Although it is true that the enemies of the Jewish people are also the enemies of G'd, our primary focus is G'd's Glory. We pray that G'd's enemies should be destroyed so that evil should not exist.

We say in the Avinu Malkeinu, "Our Father, Our King, avenge before our eyes the spilled blood of Your servants." We are supplicating G'd that we want to witness the destruction of our enemies. It is not because the nature of the Jew is to be (G'd forbid) bloodthirsty and seeking revenge, but rather we pray that those who have victimized

the Jewish people throughout history should be eliminated only because by doing so, we be witness to the glorification of G'd.

The Torah tells us that G'd said, "My Throne is not be complete until the Amalekites are obliterated from under the heavens." The reason the Amalekites need to be destroyed is not because they are the enemies of the Jewish people and have persecuted them throughout history, but rather, G'd Himself says that His Throne cannot be complete without their annihilation. Their existence undermines G'd's Glory. Therefore, they must be destroyed.

On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we recite in the Amidah that G'd should instill fear upon all mankind. We also speak about the various classifications of devoutly righteous people who will rejoice, each one of them to his own level of piety, regarding G'd's revelation in existence and the vanquishing evil from the world. Yisro focused on the periphery/beneficiary rather than the essence of the accomplishment of the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. Thus, he fell short of his potential.

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

Monday Through Friday

5:50- 6:00 am	Chumash with Rashi
6:00- 6:15 am	Pirkei Avos (Maharal)
6:15- 6:30 am	Mishna Berurah
6:30 -6:45 am	Mussar – Path of the Just
6:45 -7:25 am	Talmud—Tractate Makkos
7:25 - 8:20 am	Davening Followed by Breakfast
8:20 - 8:45 am	Mishna - Rabbi Rovner
9:00 -10:00 am	Daf Yomi- Bava Basra
2:00pm	Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:30 – 12:30pm	Talmud: Megilah Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.) Enter on 54 th Street
1:00-2:00 pm	Ramchal: Derech Hashem Location: Cedarview Capital 1Penn Plaza (45 th FL.)

Tuesday

12:10 - 1:10pm	Torah Insight Based on the Parsha Location: Yad Avraham
----------------	---

Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm	Talmud: Megilah Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL.) Enter on 54 th Street
1:00—2:00 pm	Daas Tevunos Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

11:00 –12:00pm	Duties of The Heart Location: Yad Avraham
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Talmud: Megilah Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25 th FL)