

WITNESSING HIS MAJESTY

A Fulcrum To Eternity

Original Painting By:
YORAM RAANAN

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Yisro

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

What Caused Yisro to Join Klal Yisroel

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Only Moshe Met the Standard to Converse with the Mekor Haemes

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The Measuring Rod of Justice

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The Negative Effect on the Neshama from Being in Egypt

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Who Was Yisro?

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The Pre-Qualification To Be Worthy

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1. The Jews came to Sinai on the 1st day of the 3rd month.
2. Torah: "On THIS day" rather than "THAT" day; When studying Torah, experience it as new and vibrant.
3. Wherever this principle is alluded to was post Sinai; here it is prior to Sinai.
4. If this is so (the Torah has not yet been given), what does one experience as if it is "new"?
5. Torah: "They travelled from Refidim & came to Sinai desert."
6. Midrash: Torah juxtaposes Refidim to Sinai – At Sinai they were in a repentant state, so too when leaving Refidim.
7. Gemara: R' Chiyah chose 5 students to teach – each one, one of the Books of Moses.
8. He planted flax to make nets in order to trap deer and use their hides to make parchment.
9. R' Chiyah then recorded the written law on the parchment he made.
10. Why didn't R' Chiyah just purchase the parchment from the market?
11. When studying or teaching Torah it must be done in the purest context from its inception.
12. Even prior to the giving of the Torah on the first of the month, one had to anticipate the special moment and so experience the study of Torah.
13. One must be worthy at the location; and one must be repentant.

Emerging Empowered From the Abyss

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1. Yisro heard many things resulting in his leaving Midian to become part of the Jewish People.
2. Midrash: The greatest of all the miracles was that G-d took the Jews out of Egypt.
3. The Jews left Egypt after the tenth plague; Egypt was decimated and reduced to rubble.
4. The Jews were driven out because the Egyptians believed they were all dying.
5. This is similar to a prison's walls that are destroyed so prisoners are able to escape.
6. Gemara: Pharaoh's 3 advisors: Bilaam, Yisro & Job.
7. When the bondage was suggested by Bilaam, Yisro fled in protest.
8. Yisro understood the spiritual impurities of Egypt.
9. The Jews became pagans there, falling to the 49th level of spiritual impurity.
10. To purge and detoxify from this extreme impurity is an impossibility.
11. Gemara: Even if a devout pagan repents, G-d will cause him to die; ultimately he will return to pagan ways.
12. G-d wants him to die in a repentant state.
13. When Yisro heard the Jews were taken out of Egypt as a spiritual people to receive the Torah, he was astounded.
14. This miracle was truly greater than the others.

A Critical Expose Yields a Sophisticated Judicial System

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1. One of Yisro's seven names: "Yeser" – To Add.
2. Yisro suggested a hierarchy within the infrastructure of the judicial system.
3. Yisro observed Moshe adjudicating great numbers of claims and disputes from morning until evening.
4. Yisro had two critical points regarding this manner of adjudication.
5. It is not befitting the Jewish People for Moshe to sit & the prospective defendants stand & wait their turn.
6. The enormous physical burden will cause Moshe to wither.
7. He suggested a hierarchy of courts; only the most difficult questions will be brought to Moshe.
8. 36 days prior to Moshe's passing he recounts the events and behavior of the past 40 years.
9. He said to the Jews: "When the judicial system was put into place you embraced it wholeheartedly."
10. Would it not have been better to learn from one who studied Torah in a physically deprived state?
11. Moshe spent forty days and nights studying Torah without bread or water.
12. What Yisro saw as a belittlement of their honor was needed to elevate and expose them to an unequalled dimension of holiness.
13. G-d endorsed Yisro's plan because ultimately Moshe would have withered.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Yisro



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The Value of Anticipation

After the Sea split and subsequently closed on the Egyptian army thereby destroying them, the *Torah* states, “Then *Moshe* and the Children of *Yisroel* chose to sing this song to *Hashem* (the *aaz yashir*)...*Miriam* the prophetess (*hanavia*), the sister of *Aaron*, took her drum in her hand and all the women went forth after her with drums and with dances.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The reason *Miriam* is referred to as “*Miriam* the prophetess, the sister of *Aaron*,” is because when she first prophesized, she was a young girl and the sister of *Aaron* (before the birth of *Moshe*). She said to her father, “My mother will give birth to a son and he will be the Redeemer of *Yisroel*.” Why is it important for the *Torah* to relate that after the splitting of the Sea that *Miriam* (as a young girl) had prophesized that her parents would bring forth the Redeemer of *Yisroel*? What relevance does this have to singing the praises of *Hashem* at this moment?

Midrash: The level of revelation experienced by the maidservant at the Sea was greater than that of *Yechezkel* the Prophet. One could say that *Miriam* sang the praises of *Hashem* at this time because she too was inspired. However, if this is the case then it has no relevance to her being a prophetess. Evidently, her early prophecy has relevance to this moment.

Torah in *Behaaloscha*: *Miriam* became a leper because she spoke critically (*Loshon Hara*) of her brother *Moshe*. As a result of her condition, she had to be sent out of the camp of Israel for seven days until she recovered.

Midrash: Until she could rejoin the people and travel again, *Miriam* merited that the Divine Presence, the Clouds of Glory, and the Jewish people waited for her recovery. This was because G-d rewards people measure for measure. When *Moshe*’s mother *Yocheved* could conceal him no longer, she put him into a box and placed it into the water among the reeds.

Torah: “*Miriam* stood at a distance and waited to see what would happen to him.”

Midrash: In the merit of her waiting to see what would happen to her brother *Moshe*, the camp of Israel, the Divine Presence, and the Clouds of Glory did not travel until she recovered from her leprosy. What was so special about *Miriam* waiting to see what would happen to *Moshe*? One would think that any sister would do as much. However, *Miriam*’s concern for her brother was not merely the sisterly concern for a sibling’s survival.

When *Miriam* waited in anticipation to see what was going to happen, her concern was whether *Moshe* would survive the water and thus become the Redeemer of Israel (as she had prophesized), or would he perish—thus eliminating the possibility for redemption. She was deeply distressed at the possibility that there would be no exodus from Egypt and consequently no giving of the *Torah* at Sinai. If this were to occur, the purpose of existence would not come to fruition! *Hashem* saw that not only was *Miriam* concerned that His Will would not be fulfilled, but it caused her great anguish. He rewarded her measure for measure – just as she waited to see what would happen to *Moshe* – the 600,000 Jews, the Divine Presence, and the Clouds of Glory waited for her.

It is clear that *Miriam* anticipated the moment of Redemption all her life. From the time that she had prophesized that her parents would bring forth the Redeemer of Israel, she waited for the redemption when *Moshe* would take the Jews out of Egypt to become G-d’s people at Sinai. *Miriam* rejoiced after the splitting of the Sea, not because she had reached a new level of understanding because of this great miracle, but because she had prophesized this as a child (as *Aaron*’s sister before the birth of *Moshe*) and had yearned for this moment. When it finally arrived, she was overwhelmed with joy and burst forth with song. Thus, she led the women to sing the praises of *Hashem*.

In the *Amidah* (silent prayer) of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, we ask *Hashem* to instill fear and awe in all mankind. Additionally, we ask *Hashem* to give honor and glory to *Klal Yisroel* and reveal Himself and bring *Moshiach*. We say that as a result of knowing and experiencing *Hashem*’s Presence, the *tzaddikim* (the devoutly righteous), the *yesharim* (the straight, who are at a more advanced level than the righteous), and the *chassidim* (the scrupulously devout, who are even more advanced than the straight) will rejoice at

various levels of joy. It would seem that if all mankind is brought to the realization of who G-d is and awed by His Presence, one would think that all mankind would become ecstatic as a result of this realization and revelation. Therefore, why do we single out only these three levels of spiritually advanced individuals?

It is because the *tzaddik*, the *yaasher*, and the *chassid* have dedicated their lives to the sanctification of G-d and await the revelation of His glory. Therefore, when *Hashem* does reveal Himself, they will be overcome with the various levels of joy. The ordinary person, who does not anticipate and yearn for that moment, will not appreciate it as something extraordinarily special when it takes place. This is what the *Torah* is communicating with the verse, “*Miriam* the prophetess” led the women in songs of praise. The question one must ask is – when one witnesses a *kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of G-d’s Name), how does one react? Does one become ecstatic with joy? Or, does one remain relatively unmoved. The answer to that question will indicate what level a person has reached.

Why Yisro Saw What Others did Not See?

Torah: “*Yisro*, the minister of *Midian*, the father-in-law of *Moshe*, heard everything that G-d did to *Moshe* and to *Yisroel*...”

Chazal: Although the entire world was aware that G-d had taken the Jews out of Egypt, destroyed Egypt, and split the Sea, there was no response or reaction. *Yisro*, however, did respond by leaving behind all his glory as the sheik of *Midian*. *Yisro* had processed this information differently than the rest of the world. He was impressed by what he had heard about the Exodus and all that had transpired.

What has to be understood is – why was *Yisro* able to understand and appreciate what had happened to such a degree that it was worthwhile for him to abandon everything he had accomplished until that moment to become part of the Jewish people? Why was he able to recognize the Hand of *Hashem* at this level? Although *Yisro* was world renowned as a leader and as a statesman, the *Torah* tells us that he identified himself as “the father-in-law of *Moshe*.”

Rashi citing *Chazal:* In the past *Moshe* identified himself as the son-in-law of *Yisro*. However, now *Yisro* identified

himself as the “father-in-law of the king (*Moshe*).” From this point onward *Yisro* is continuously referred to as “the father-in-law of *Moshe*” without identifying him by name, or as “*Yisro*, the father-in-law of *Moshe*.” This level of identification clearly indicates what *Yisro* truly valued. He saw himself in a secondary position to his son-in-law *Moshe*. Because of the degree of value and reverence that he demonstrated towards *Moshe*, he was able to process and internalize the events of the exodus differently than the rest of the world. Since *Yisro* was able to value and appreciate the spirituality of *Moshe*, he was able to appreciate the events of the Exodus as no one else could.

Every morning we recite the blessing of the *Torah*, “Blessed are You, *Hashem*, our G-d, King of the universe, Who selected us from all the peoples and gave us His *Torah*...” When one recites this blessing, one is priding himself that *Hashem* has chosen him to receive the *Torah*. The question is, does one truly feel fortunate and privileged to be chosen to be the recipient of *Hashem*’s most precious commodity, the *Torah*, or does one view the *Torah* only as something that one does or even as a burden which restricts one’s life?

The one who appreciates the *Torah* and integrates it into every aspect of his life is the person who truly feels fortunate. The Jewish people throughout history have been persecuted and experienced many tragedies. Yet we say, “How good is our portion! How pleasant is our lot! And How beautiful is our inheritance!” The person who says this and truly appreciates the blessing of being a Jew is the one who feels fortunate even in the face of tragedy because his lot is *Hashem*’s *Torah*. He will understand as it is stated in the *Torah*, “Just as a father punishes a child, so too will *Hashem* punish you (the Jewish people).”

Rabbeinu Yona in *Shaare Teshuvah*: Just as when a father punishes his child it is out of love and not in any way to harm him, so too (although we may not understand the reason for G-d’s punishment) *Hashem* punishes us out of love and not to destroy us. Just as *Yisro* was able to process the events of the day correctly because he appreciated and esteemed *Moshe* to a great degree, so too are we able to see and appreciate *Hashem*’s involvement in existence and truly feel fortunate that *Hashem* has chosen us to be His people. He has given us the most valuable gift – His *Torah*.

How One’s Feelings Reflect Who One Is

After *Moshe* informed *Yisro* of all that *Hashem* had done for the Jewish people regarding their exodus from Egypt, the *Torah* states, “*Yisro* rejoiced (*v’yichad*) over all the good that *Hashem* had done for *Yisroel*.” The *Torah* could have used the term “*v’yismach*” to express the joy of *Yisro*; rather, it chooses the term “*v’yichad*”.

Rashi citing *Chazal*: Even though *Yisro* rejoiced upon hearing from *Moshe* all the events that had transpired on behalf of the Jewish people, he was simultaneously upset that his fellow non-Jews were destroyed.

Gemara: Based on this verse, for ten generations one should not speak negatively of a non-Jew in the presence of a convert because he and his descendants have sensitivity due to their pedigree, which is that of non-Jewish origin. It is only after ten generations does one lose this sensitivity.

It is interesting to note that although *Yisro* said, “Blessed is *Hashem*, Who has rescued you from under the hand of Egypt...,” this expression of thanks and acknowledgment to *Hashem* was not expressed by *Moshe* or the 600,000 (Jewish males above the age of 20) who left Egypt. We see that despite the fact that *Yisro* was a *tzaddik* (devoutly righteous person) he was sensitive about his non-Jewish background. Thus, he rejoiced when he heard that *Hashem* saved the Jewish people, but he was simultaneously troubled that the Egyptians were destroyed as a result of the Jews. When a non-Jew hears that another non-Jew was devastated or even punished, he is not necessarily disturbed by that information. However, when he hears that it had come about because of the Jew, then he is distressed.

Shlomo HaMelech (King Solomon) in *Mishlei* (*Proverbs*): “With the fall of your enemy do not rejoice.”

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: When *Achashverosh* gave the order that *Haman* should parade *Mordechai* through the street wearing the royal vestments on the mount of the king, he was not able to mount the horse because he was weakened from the many days that he fasted on behalf of the Jewish people. *Mordechai* asked *Haman* to bend over so that he should be able to step on his back to mount the horse.

While stepping on *Haman*’s back, *Mordechai* kicked him. Seeing that *Mordechai*, his archenemy, was not only victorious but was gloating over his disgrace,

Haman said, “Are you allowed to kick your enemy when he is down? Does it not say in *Proverbs* ‘With the fall of one’s enemy one does not rejoice’?”

Mordechai responded by saying that this phrase in *Mishlei* is only referring to a fellow Jew. One Jew must have a special feeling for his fellow Jew. The Jewish people are bound up together and each must feel the other’s pain. Even if it is his enemy, he must not rejoice at his downfall.

Yisro, one of the greatest converts who ever lived, was pained to hear about the destruction of the Egyptians. His internal feelings teach us how one should feel vis-à-vis a fellow Jew. The principle of “one must love his fellow (Jew) as he loves himself” is not only a spiritual concept but must be a reality. The entire Jewish people are tied together. When one gives the benefit of the doubt to his fellow, it is a manifestation of *Ahavas Yisroel* (love among Jews). This must be deeply embedded in us. We must feel the hurt of our fellow and be able to empathize with his situation. This is also true with giving charity. When one gives charity to the needy it is not that he is simply giving money to help another person, he is taking care of something that is a part of himself. In fact, there is a principle, “A Jew must feel the pain of his fellow Jew.”

Gemara: Every day a *Bas Kol* (Heavenly Voice) emanates from the ruins of Jerusalem bemoaning the fact that the Jewish people are exiled from their Father. *Hashem* is grieved by this. The question is does the Jew feel *Hashem*’s grief? Are we pained to see the state of affairs of the Jewish people regarding their spirituality?

Shulchan Aruch: Every Jew must mourn the destruction of the *Bais HaMikdash* (the Holy Temple) every day. As much as *Yisro* understood, appreciated, and even internalized what *Hashem* had done for the Jewish people, he was nevertheless simultaneously upset that his fellow non-Jew was destroyed. If this is how he felt at the demise of the Egyptians who were evil, how much more so a Jew should be distressed by a fellow Jew’s unfortunate situation. If one is not distressed, it is only an indication that he views his fellow Jew as being outside of himself.

The Value of Being Unified

Torah: Prior to receiving the *Torah* at Sinai, “They journeyed from *Rephidim* and arrived at the Wilderness

of Sinai and encamped in the Wilderness; and Israel encamped (*vayichan*) there, opposite the mountain.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The *Torah* uses the term “*vayichan*–encamped” in the singular form rather than the plural to indicate that the Jewish people gathered opposite the mountain like a single person with a “single heart.” The Jewish people were united.

Torah: “*Moshe* ascended to G-d, and *Hashem* called to him from the mountain saying, ‘So shall you say to the House of *Yaakov* and relate to the Children of Israel. You have seen what I did to Egypt, and I have borne you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Me.’ Meaning, prior to the enslavement of the Jewish people, Egypt was culpable for its evil ways. However, only after they engaged with the Jewish people did *Hashem* bring punishment and destruction upon them. Additionally, when the Egyptians pursued the Jewish people to the Sea and attempted to strike them with arrows and catapults, the Heavenly Clouds protected them as the Eagle protects its young.

Torah: “And now, if you hearken to Me and observe My covenant, you shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire world. You shall be to Me a kingdom of ministers and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak...” Meaning, the Jewish people are the most special and precious people to *Hashem* and the rest of the world is secondary. We find that the prerequisite for receiving the *Torah* and becoming the nation of *Hashem* was predicated on “*vayichan*” – united together as one person. Why was this a prerequisite for receiving the *Torah* at Sinai?

If there is dissension among people and they are fractionalized it must be due to a lack of *Ahavas Yisroel* (love among Jews). If each person views himself apart from the other then each views the other in a negative light. However, if each person is dedicated to his fellow, then there is no fractionalization and each person views his fellow positively.

Initially, during the time of *Yosef*, Pharaoh dreamed of seven healthy fleshed cows followed by seven emaciated cows coming forth from the Nile. *Yosef* interpreted this dream to mean that Egypt would experience seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine.

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The healthy fleshed cows were beautiful because they represented the years of plenty.

Meaning, when it is a time of plenty people view one another in a positive light. However, when situations become difficult and stressful, people will regard one another negatively because of what they themselves lack. Under such conditions, there is animosity because each person is envious of the other person's situation.

For one not to be distracted, he must feel contented and satisfied. Usually this comes about in a time when there is enough for everyone. However, when one has negativity, for whatever reason, one is distracted. Since *Klal Yisroel* was united, "*vayichan*," at Sinai as one person, with one ideal, it was an indication of their positive feelings towards one another. This state of unity was a prerequisite for receiving the *Torah* at Sinai.

In order for the Jewish people to be able to appreciate and internalize the words of G-d there can be no distractions. Even before the giving of the *Torah*, *Moshe* recounted to the Jewish people how *Hashem* had taken them out of Egypt and punished their enemies. He presented before them the significance of becoming the *Am Hashem* (the people of G-d). They would be "a kingly priestly nation and a holy people." In order to internalize this information and process it to the point that they could respond with, "We will do and we will listen," it was necessary for them to be unified, as one entity, without any negativity or animosity towards one another.

Pirkei Avos (Ethics of Our Fathers): "Who is a wealthy man? The one who is satisfied with his portion." This concept goes beyond the material. It touches upon even the spiritual. If a person is not satisfied with his lot, it is not possible for him to focus properly to attain spirituality. His lack of contentment and neediness will cause him to be distracted. In this mode a person is continuously preoccupied with his own agenda (whether it is seeking his own glory, his needs, or other ulterior motives to achieve his level satisfaction). As a result of this, he cannot pray or interact with others with the proper intent.

However, if a person is satisfied with his portion, then he has no other agenda other than doing the right thing for the right reason. Being in a state of contentment creates a setting in which one can develop spiritually in the most meaningful way. If there is unity and *Ahavas Yisroel*, then one has the trust and the presence of mind to be able to focus and internalize spirituality. This is the reason the unification of the Jewish people was a prerequisite for the receiving of the *Torah* at Sinai.

Chofetz Chaim: If a person trips on his own feet, he is not upset at his feet because they are part of his body. Identically, if Jews are totally unified, one does not view his fellow with a critical eye but only in the most positive light. Therefore, the Jewish people were able to appreciate and internalize *Hashem's* most precious gift.

One Must be Primed For Spirituality

Torah: "*Hashem* said to *Moshe*, "Behold! I come to you in the thickness of the cloud, so that the people will hear as I speak to you, and they will also believe in you forever." Meaning, when the Jewish people will see the open communication between *Hashem* and *Moshe* they will believe in him as G-d's spokesman, communicating His Word to them. In order for the Jewish people to be qualified to receive the *Torah*, they needed to purify and prepare themselves for that experience.

Torah: "*Hashem* said to *Moshe*, "Go to the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and they shall wash their clothing. Let them be prepared for the third day, for on the third day *Hashem* shall descend in the sight of the entire people on Mount Sinai..." *Hashem* said to *Moshe* that after the Jewish people have purified and prepared themselves, they will be able to "see" *Hashem*. They will prophesize in a wake state and they will experience the level of prophecy of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. Without the proper readiness, they could not reach the level needed to experience the Sinai event.

Ramban in his commentary: The experience at Sinai—the thunder, the lighting, the fires, and hearing the word of *Hashem*—affected their *neshamos* (souls) and that of their descendants, until the end of time. We see from the *Torah* that the preparations were necessary to qualify for receiving the *Torah*, but also to reach a state of receptivity whereby they could see and appreciate the communication that was taking place between *Hashem* and *Moshe*. As *Hashem* said, "In you they will believe forever." Meaning, as the *Ramban* explains, that up until the Sinai event *Moshe's* position (as a prophet and conduit for the Words of *Hashem*) could be questioned.

Torah: Before the Jewish people arrived at Sinai, they witnessed the splitting of the Sea. *Moshe* stretched out his arm and split it, thus allowing the Jews to cross to safety. After the Egyptian army pursued them into the Sea, *Moshe* again stretched out his arm and caused it to close on them. The *Torah* states, "On that day, *Hashem*

saved Israel from the hand of Egypt, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great hand that *Hashem* inflicted upon Egypt; and the people revered *Hashem*, and they had faith in *Hashem* and in *Moshe*, His servant.” After witnessing the destruction of the Egyptian army, the Jewish people sang G-d’s praises – (*aaz yashir*). They said, “This is my G-d and I will exalt Him...”

Chazal: *Hashem*’s Presence was palpable even to the lowly maidservant. If the Jews were able to see G-d and appreciate His existence without any level of preparation, then why did *Hashem* set many prerequisites (separating from their wives, purifying themselves and their clothing in the *mikvah*, etc) prior to the Sinai event?

Torah: It was only when they reached Sinai that the Jewish people had the clarity to appreciate that *Hashem* was the One who had taken them out of Egypt. However, this is difficult to understand since even before then the *Torah* attests that the Jewish people believed in “*Hashem* and *Moshe* His servant.” In other words, they already believed that *Moshe* was acting as the agent of G-d by performing all the miracles that had occurred up until that moment. If this is the case, then why was it only confirmed at Sinai that it was *Hashem* that had taken them out of Egypt?

Rambam in *Hilchos Yisodei Ha’Torah* (*The Fundamentals of Torah*): All the miracles that were performed by *Moshe*, such as the splitting of the Red Sea, the plagues on Egypt, the receiving of the manna (the miracle food of the desert), and the splitting of the rock to extract water, etc, were not intended to prove that he was the prophet of *Hashem*. Rather, every miracle was performed for a specific purpose. For example, the splitting and closing of the Sea was intended to destroy the Egyptians. The miracle of the manna was performed to provide sustenance for the Jews in the desert.

Rambam: If a person’s belief was based on miracles alone, it could be contested. If miracles are the basis for believing that *Moshe* was G-d’s prophet, one could say that all of them came about through sorcery. A serious consequence of this would be that the authenticity of the *Torah* as G-d’s Word would be put in question. Therefore, the Jewish people were only able to understand and believe that *Moshe*’s word was the Word of G-d, by witnessing *Hashem* openly and directly communicating to him in their presence.

From the words of *Rambam*, we can now understand

that the miracles themselves were not sufficient to prove that *Hashem* had taken the Jews out of Egypt. Even the splitting of the Sea, where the maidservant had experienced G-d at a level that was greater than *Yechezkel* the prophet, was not sufficient. One could question that all of this came about through witchcraft. *Hashem* therefore said, “Only at Sinai will the Jews know that I took them out of Egypt.”

The *Torah* was given in a context of absolute, incontestable, reality and is not based on presumption and assumption. Although this was the reality of Sinai, the Jewish people were not able to experience it without the proper preparation. In order to qualify to be affected by spirituality, one must be able to internalize it at a very advanced level.

Avraham Avinu (Our Patriarch) took his son *Yitzchak* to the Akeidah (the Binding of *Yitzchak*). *Eliezer*, his servant and *Ishmael*, his son (born to him from *Hagar*), accompanied them to *Har HaMoriah* (Mt. Moriah). When they all approached the mountain, *Avraham* asked his servant *Eliezer* and his son *Ishmael*, “Do you see anything on the top of the mountain?” They both responded that they saw nothing.

When *Avraham* asked *Yitzchak* the same question, he responded that he could see a cloud on top of the mountain. This indicated to *Avraham* that *Eliezer* and *Ishmael* were not at a level to witness the Akeidah. Since they would not adequately process the event, they could not be present. It would have been a disgrace for them to misinterpret something of such an advanced spiritual nature. In order for one to appreciate and internalize the value of *Torah* and its mitzvos, one must have a degree of orientation and receptivity to spirituality. If one is involved in existence as a hedonist, whose perspective is only physicality, then he will not appreciate the relevance of *Torah* and mitzvos to his existence.

The Importance of Perception

Torah: “...*Moshe* sat to judge the people, and the people stood by *Moshe* from morning until evening. The father-in-law of *Moshe* saw everything that he was doing to the people, and he said, “What is this thing that you do to the people?”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “*Moshe* was sitting like a king and the Jewish people were standing.” What troubled

Yisro was that *Moshe* was belittling the honor of the Jewish people by having them stand in his presence. *Yisro* understood and appreciated the underlying meaning of being worthy to be chosen as G-d's people. Therefore, he considered *Moshe's* posture vis-à-vis the Jewish people as a belittlement. To this criticism, *Moshe* responded, "Because the people come to me to seek G-d. When they have a matter, one comes to me, and I judge between a man and his fellow, and I make known the decrees of G-d and His teachings."

After *Yisro* heard this response, he was satisfied because he understood that *Moshe* himself was the representation of G-d's Presence. Initially *Yisro* criticized *Moshe* for sitting while the people stood. Although *Yisro* understood and revered *Moshe* as a prophet of G-d, he did not fully comprehend his representation as the leader and teacher of the Jewish people. It was only after *Moshe* explained to him, "Because people come to me to seek G-d..." *Yisro* understood that *Moshe* was the conduit through which G-d communicated His *Torah* to the Jewish people. In fact, it was an honor for the Jewish people to stand before *Moshe* because he was the "ish Elokim – Man of G-d."

There is a Positive Commandment to revere G-d, "*Es Hashem Elokecha tirah.*" The word "*Es*" in itself has no meaning but functions to indicate that there is an adjunct to what is being discussed. The *Torah* is telling us that not only does one need to revere G-d, but also there is someone else who must be revered no less than Him.

Rabbi Akiva: The "*Es*" indicates that we also include the *Torah* Sages. Thus, it is a Positive Commandment to have the same regard for a *Talmid Chacham* (*Torah* Sage), as one has for *Hashem*.

Maharal of Prague: The reason *Hashem* wants the *Torah* Sage to be regarded at such a level is because the degree to which one reveres his teacher will be the degree to which one is receptive to his teachings. In addition, if the *Talmid Chacham*, who is a representation and embodiment of G-d's *Torah* is venerated, then

Hashem will be as well. Therefore, the *Torah* dictates that the *Talmid Chacham* should be esteemed to no less a degree than G-d Himself. Without the teachings of the *Torah* Sage, one is not able to understand G-d.

Rambam in *Hilchos Talmud Torah* (*The Laws Pertaining to the Study of Torah*): A *Rebbe* (teacher) should not joke with his students nor should he eat and drink in their presence. If the students see their *Rebbe* in the same context as themselves, then the *Rebbe* could no longer be as effective as he could have been. What he could have taught his students in a short period will take longer to communicate. The effectiveness of a person is based on one's perception of his presence.

Initially *Yisro* did not fully comprehend the dimension of *Moshe* and thus thought it was a belittlement of the Jews to stand while *Moshe* sat while dealing with their issues. It was only after he understood that *Moshe* was synonymous with the *D'var Hashem* (Word of G-d), that he understood that it was in fact an honor for the Jews to stand in *Moshe's* presence.

Gemara: When one enters a *Bais HaMedrash* (location of *Torah* study) or a synagogue, one must have "*koved rosh* – a serious mindset." These locations are a semblance of the *Bais HaMikdash* (the Holy Temple) because the Divine Presence is there. Therefore, one must enter with a proper mindset. However, the importance of *koved rosh* goes beyond this understanding. It is only if one enters with that seriousness that he will have the capacity to value his *Torah* study and *tefillah* (prayer).

