



# WITNESSING HIS MAJESTY

A Fulcrum To Eternity

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## YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Yisro

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

**What Inspired Yisro to Give Up His Past?**

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**The Proper Environment to Secure One's Belief**

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**Bilaam's Tunnel Vision: Hate Disrupts Protocol**

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**Moshe Wanted His Children to See the Hand of Hashem**

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**Yisro Understood What Would Happen if Moshe Came  
Out to Acknowledge Him**

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**Ramchal:** Minchas Chinuch, "The Knowing Heart"

## 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.





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## Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Yisro



# WITNESSING HIS MAJESTY

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### **The Mechanism to Process Spirituality**

**Torah:** At the splitting of the Sea, *Hashem's* presence was so manifest that even the Jewish maidservant who witnessed this miracle said, "Behold, this is my G-d I will glorify him!"

**Chazal:** The maidservant experienced a level of revelation at the Sea that was greater than any revelation every experienced by the prophet *Yechezkel*. Although the maidservant at the Sea saw G-d in a more revealed and obvious manner than the prophet *Yechezkel*, she remained a maidservant after the experience while *Yechezkel* became the prophet of his generation. The maidservant's life was not changed in any way as a result of her experience. How come the revelation of G-d did not cause the maidservant to become more than a maidservant? Yet, *Yechezkel's* level of revelation was far less than that of the maidservant and he dedicated his entire life to G-d. How do we understand this?

We read in this week's *parsha* that after hearing what *Hashem* had done for the Jews, *Yisro* was so affected that he decided to leave *Midian* and join the Jews in the desert in order to cleave to *Hashem*. *Yisro* was not the only person to hear about what *Hashem* had done to Egypt. The entire world knew that G-d had destroyed Egypt and redeemed His people, yet *Yisro* was the only one to be affected while the rest of the world remained unchanged.

**Gemara in Zevachim:** When *Hashem* was giving the *Torah* at Sinai the earth began to quake and the nations of the world ran in fear to their prophet *Bilaam*. They said to *Bilaam* that *Hashem* was destroying the world, but *Bilaam* explained that the reason why the earth was shaking was because *Hashem* was giving the *Torah* to His people. Upon hearing this news the nations of the world calmed down and returned to their pagan and idolatrous lives. The nations of the world were not affected in any way despite the fact that they clearly

understood that *Hashem* was giving the *Torah* at that moment. With that level of clarity they should have gone to Sinai, yet they remained unchanged.

We see that people can hear about and understand the occurrence of momentous events and yet remain unchanged. The maidservant at the Sea remained the maidservant after witnessing the revelation of G-d despite having a level of clarity that was greater than *Yechezkel* the prophet. The nations of the world heard about the miraculous events surrounding the Jewish exodus from Egypt, yet only *Yisro* was affected.

The entire world knew that *Hashem* was giving the *Torah* to the Jews but they nevertheless continued in their pagan ways. Why was *Yisro* affected and not anyone else? Why was *Yechezkel* a prophet who dedicated his life to G-d, while the maidservant at the Sea did not change? The answer is that understanding is not the only prerequisite for being affected by G-d. One must devote himself to constant growth and preparation in order have clarity to be affected.

*Chazal*: *Yisro* had devoted his life to exploring and serving every conceivable deity in the world and consequently concluded that *Hashem* was the One and Only G-d. He developed the capacity to appreciate *Hashem* through his lifetime of exploring other deities and realizing that they were all false. It was because of this conditioning and training that *Yisro* had the capacity to change his entire life and join the Jews after hearing how the All Powerful G-d turned nature upside down in order to redeem His people.

*Yechezkel*, the prophet, devoted his entire life to the service of *Hashem*. Every moment of his life was invested in performing G-d's Will. It is because of this dedicated conditioning and development that *Yechezkel* appreciated and internalized every experience. For *Yechezkel*, seeing *Hashem* was not an external occurrence – it was part of his total being; whereas the maidservant at the Sea was a mere maidservant prior to her revelation of G-d. How could a maidservant truly appreciate that revelation and be affected by it? What preparation or development did she have prior to that moment that would give her the capacity to be affected? This is why the maidservant returned to being a maidservant after seeing G-d in the most absolute and obvious manner.

Often people have spiritual experiences in life such as praying at the *Kotel* in Jerusalem, meeting a special

individual, or hearing about some miraculous event. However the moment that the spiritual experience is over the person returns to his prior perspective completely unaffected by the experience. Without the ongoing development process and conditioning through the study of *Torah* and the performance of Mitzvos it is not possible to develop a capacity to be affected by *Hashem's* presence in this world. Knowledge and understanding are only some of the prerequisites needed for being affected. We witness miracles every day; however, how have they impacted on our lives? Evidently we need to continuously engage in developing our spiritual capacity.

## Understanding is more than Knowledge

We read in this week's *parsha*: "*Moshe* went out to greet his father-in-law (*Yisro*) and ...*Moshe* told his father-in-law all that *Hashem* had done to Pharaoh and Egypt for Israel's sake – all the trouble that had befallen them on the way – and that *Hashem* had rescued them." What was the purpose of *Moshe* sharing this information with his father-in-law *Yisro* (who was not a Jew)? This information seemingly had no relevance to *Yisro*.

*Rashi* citing the *Mechilta*: The purpose of telling *Yisro* about all the wondrous events surrounding the Jewish exodus was to draw *Yisro* close to *Torah*. (*Moshe* wanted *Yisro* to stand with the Jews at Sinai to receive the *Torah*.)

We see from this *Chazal*, that the more a person understands and sees the Hand of G-d in this world the more that person will come close to *Torah*. If we were to comprehend *Hashem's* ongoing relationship with existence then we would be drawn closer to *Torah*. A person may believe in G-d as well as believe that he is doing His Will by being a "good person." However, if it is not in conformity with the *Torah* then that person's conduct is incorrect. The only way to be truly a "good person" with respect to G-d, is that one must follow the *Torah*. The way for one to understand this is to observe and see the Hand of G-d in existence.

*Moshe* did not share the detailed events about the Jewish exodus with *Yisro* for the sake of keeping him abreast of current events; *Moshe* wanted *Yisro* to appreciate that everything that happens in this world is due to G-d's involvement. What happened to the Jewish people was not a mere "event".



If a person has the proper perspective and ongoing cognizance he would be able to see *Hashem's* involvement in existence. The question is – how does one gain this perspective? Is it through the study of *Torah*? It is possible to study *Torah* on an intellectual basis and not gain a *Torah* perspective. The only way to achieve this level of clarity is to concentrate on increasing one's "fear of *Hashem*." As it says in the verse, "The prerequisite to wisdom is the fear of *Hashem*." Therefore, one must study *Torah* with the intent of increasing his awareness of G-d and not just for gaining information and intellectual advancement. As we see, *Moshe* informed *Yisro* of the Jewish exodus not for intellectual or factual purposes, but rather to increase *Yisro's* appreciation of *Hashem* and thus bring him closer to *Torah*.

## Breaking through the Interference

*Torah*: "Yisro, the Minister of Midian, the father-in-law of Moshe, heard all that G-d had done for Moshe and Israel, His People – that *Hashem* took Israel out of Egypt." After *Yisro* heard all that *Hashem* had done for the Jewish people, he abandoned his position as Minister of Midian and his community to join the Jewish people in the desert. What did *Yisro* hear that caused him to abandon his life in Midian? What is "all that G-d had done..."?

*Rashi*: "All that G-d had done..." means that *Yisro* had heard that *Hashem* had taken the Jews out of Egypt. The revealed miracles and the plagues are not mentioned as being part of what *Yisro* had heard. He was impressed by the mere fact that *Hashem* had taken the Jews out of Egypt. Why was *Yisro* impressed? By the time of the tenth and final plague (the killing of the first born), Egypt was already decimated and in ruins. At that point the Jews did not need G-d to take them out – they simply could have left Egypt.

The fact is four-fifths of the Jews did not leave Egypt because they did not want to leave and therefore perished during the plague of darkness. Despite seeing the plagues and the miracles, they did not have the clarity to want to leave the country of their bondage. After seeing the Hand of G-d in such an obvious manner how could they not have the clarity? Evidently life is more than clarity of mind – it is a sense and an internalization of reality. What prevents this sense and internalization?

*Mishna Brurah* ( a commentary on the Code of Laws): The value of the *Pesukei D'Zimra* is to break through the layers of (spiritual) impurity that exists in the world so that *Hashem* receives our prayers without interference. There are forces in existence that can prevent and interfere with our prayers as well as our actions. These forces are not something that we can visualize; nevertheless, they are part of reality.

The Egyptians were engaged in idolatry, witchcraft, incest, and adultery; and their level of spiritual impurity was such that they are referred to as an "abomination". Egypt was a stronghold of impurity that the Jews were exposed to for 210 years. How was it possible for the Jews to shed this impurity when they left Egypt to receive the *Torah* at Sinai? Evidently a great miracle was needed to purge the Jews from this impurity. This is what impressed *Yisro* – that *Hashem* was able to take the Jews out of their spiritual impurity and give them the capacity for Sinai. *Yisro* had experimented with every form of idol worship in existence and was able to appreciate the dimension of this miracle because he truly understood the meaning of spiritual impurity.

The fact that *Hashem* was able to free the Jews from their spiritual bondage was what impressed *Yisro* to join the Jewish people in the desert. We ask *Hashem* in our daily prayers that He should free the bound and raise the fallen. This refers not only to physical freedom but also to spiritual redemption from the spiritual impurities of existence.

## The Caliber of Individual Needed to Teach Torah

This week's *Parsha*: *Yisro* observed how *Moshe* was single-handedly judging the Jewish People. *Yisro* advised *Moshe*, his son-in-law, that he should not be the sole judge of the Jewish people because eventually he would wither from the enormous strain and become incapable of handling the position. *Yisro* therefore suggested to *Moshe* that he select judges and form a judicial system. *Moshe* went before *Hashem* and asked if he should establish a court system. *Hashem* agreed. Why didn't *Moshe* understand that he could not continue to judge by himself as *Yisro* had said? Why did *Moshe* believe that he should be the judge of the Jewish people without others to assist him? Didn't he know that he would eventually become aged and incapable of fulfilling that role?

Before *Moshe* passed away he admonished the Jewish People and recounted that they were satisfied when he decided to appoint judges and create a judicial system (*Parshas Devorim*. ) *Moshe* said in his admonishment that Jews were happy with the new judicial system because they believed that the new system would be in their best interest.

*Rashi* citing *Chazal*: The Jews should have understood and expressed their preference for having *Moshe* as their teacher since he had learned the *Torah* directly from *Hashem* and had sacrificed for the *Torah*. They should have insisted that *Moshe* be the only one to adjudicate for them. The Jews understood that *Moshe's* judgment was strict and that he could not be swayed; however, the new judicial system would provide them with numerous judges that would be lenient and easy to influence.

This is why *Moshe* admonished the Jews. *Moshe* represented the word of *Hashem* and understood that just as he affected the Jews at Sinai when they received the *Torah* through him, he could continue to influence them on a daily basis if he served as their judge. Since *Moshe* was the conduit for the *Torah*, he believed that he was the most qualified to render judgments regardless of how old and withered he

would become. Nevertheless, the Jewish people did not seem to concur with this belief since they readily accepted a new judicial system without complaint. Although *Moshe* accepted *Yisro's* suggestion to start a judicial system, he understood that only his transmission of *Torah* to the Jewish People would have the greatest impact. A person must be at a special level to teach *Torah* and make an impact.

For example, *Rav Shach z'tl* was teaching a *Torah* class during a time when scud missiles were being launched against Israel. He was asked by a student what they should do if the missile siren were to sound during the class. *Rav Shach* told them that the *Torah* that he was going to be teaching them was so powerful that the class would not be interrupted. This is in fact what had taken place. It was only after the class ended that the missile siren sounded!

Once, an ordinary person had heard the *Vilna Gaon* say the *Shema*. He was so affected by that event that he dedicated his entire life to the study of *Torah*. We see that the person who teaches *Torah* not only imparts knowledge but also transmits spirituality to his students. *Moshe* wished to remain the sole teacher and judge of the Jewish people because he understood his capabilities. Unfortunately the Jews did not.



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