

The Eyes of Yitro: Parshat Behaalotcha

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Kolpowitz-Stein

With *Bnei Yisroel's* imminent entry into Israel, before the incident of the spies, Moshe begs Yitro to stay with them. Yitro turns down Moshe's first entreaty. Moshe continues to try to convince him, reminding him "that you have been as eyes to us" and promising Yitro goodness and benefits in the new land if he goes with them.

Why did Moshe feel compelled to plead so passionately for Yitro to stay? What connection does being the "eyes" for *Bnei Yisroel* have with this request? Rashi offers three responses. First, Yitro, you will be as dear to us as the apple of our eye. Further, you will clarify things for us in the future as you have in the past when you suggested implementing an effective judicial system. Finally, since your own eyes have seen the wonders that Hashem has performed in the desert, it is natural that you continue the journey with us.

These three seemingly separate explanations explain the multiple facets of Moshe's arguments.

The Shaarei Chaim explains that Moshe wanted to prevent the possibility of a desecration of God's name, for the nations of the world could interpret Yitro's leaving as reflecting negatively on *Bnei Yisroel* and on their God, especially since he had personally seen the wonders Hashem performed.

At the very basis of Moshe's plea lies a very strong acknowledgement of the good that Yitro did for our people through his sage advice. We recognize that we owe you, says Moshe, and we will continue to repay you when we enter the land. You will live on the

land and we will treat you as the apple of our eye, for we will be forever grateful for the good you did for us. In fact, says the *Imrei Shefer*, showing gratitude is a fundamental characteristic of our nation, as the very name *Yehudim* implies. He who cannot show gratitude to others will feel he never needs anyone's help, and eventually deny the gratitude he owes to his Maker.

There is a circle of gratitude that begins with Moshe, continues with Yitro, and then returns to *Bnei Yisroel*. The *Torah* records the words of Yitro's daughters as they relate how an "Egyptian man" saved them from the shepherds. The *Imrei Shefer* fills in the missing lines. Yitro's daughters tried to thank Moshe for his help at the well, but he refused their thanks, saying they have the Egyptian man to thank, for had Moshe not slain him, he would not have fled Egypt. Therefore, they reported to their father, as per the lesson of Moshe, that an Egyptian man saved them. Not to be put off, Yitro felt a sense of gratitude for Moshe and sent his daughters to invite him to his home, even eventually giving him one of his daughters in marriage, and finally following him into the desert to connect with this man's God.

The Gemara tells us that the descendants of Yitro were members of the *Sanhedrin* whose job it was to be the "eyes of the congregation" through their wise judgment. It was this sense of gratitude, notes the *Derash David* along with a recognition of the absolute truth of both the God of the Jews and the absolute right and wrong, through which Yitro merited having such descendants. According to the Midrash, Pharaoh had sought advice on how to deal with the troubling explosion of the Jewish

population. Yitro ran away, for he understood what Pharaoh was up to, recognized the true God, and fled for his life from any association with Pharaoh. It was this combination of truth and chessed that he bequeathed to his descendants as they sat in the halls of justice. And so Moshe pleaded with Yitro. Come with us. We owe you so much. And we will continue to owe you as your descendants will open our eyes to further insights into the Torah.

Rabbi Lichtman notes that Yitro's initial rejection of continuing the journey toward Israel seems to be the model for the reasons so many give for not making aliyah, "I shall not go; only to my land and my family shall I go." What is holding us back? Is it fear of a new land, is it missing family, or the discomfort of a new social structure? But Moshe negates all these excuses. Hashem will be good to you in Israel. Whatever you can accomplish in your native land pales in comparison to the spiritual benefits of living in the holy land. But Yitro may still want to go back where he feels he can exert greater influence upon the masses and do greater good.

The Sanzer Rebbe points out that greater spiritual growth comes through greater struggle, and the land of Israel eases the struggle. Nevertheless, there is a special kedushah in Israel that helps bring us closer to Hashem, says Rav Moshe. Yitro saw and taught us many levels of kedushah. May it be Hashem's will that our eyes see Hashem's nearness to us and that we merit entering Israel as a free and holy nation speedily, in our day.



The Six Zechirot for Corona Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The fourth *zechira* is to remember the sin of the golden calf. The Jewish nation calculated that Moshe had already been gone for 40 days and would not return. They wanted a medium to connect to Hashem and were searching for a sense of purpose and leadership. A lot of the major mistakes we ever made as a people stem from this mentality, not seeing Hashem and looking for a substitute. Herzl wrote - Hashem is not with us. We'll never have a home in Europe. So let us create our own country where we can be like other nations. This is also what the *Tzedokim*, the Karaites, and the Reform movement espoused. They wanted something new and different. New doesn't necessarily mean evil. A washing machine certainly washes clothes more efficiently than the lake. What makes it wrong is the disloyalty. Divorcing oneself from the Creator is the antithesis of our purpose.

We Jews have the ability to have an intimate relationship with Hashem. In our present situation, if nothing else, we've learned that

we have no control. It says in the Gemara that we will reach a point where we will have no one or anything to rely on but Hashem. We need to internalize and hold on to that message.

The fifth *zechira* is to remember what Hashem did to Miriam when we left Egypt. She was struck with *tzoraat* (leprosy) for speaking about Moshe. *Loshon hara* is about focusing on the external and negative aspects of others. *Tzoraat* was meant to teach a person that their vision of the other person was only skin deep. If the *kohen* pronounced the person impure, he had to go into isolation. Seven days of complete disconnect from others would make him people thirsty, like someone shipwrecked on a desert island who finally found another human being. Being forced to practice social distancing should change us. We should certainly not be discussing people or building barriers by finding fault in them. We need to reach out to others and show them we care.

The sixth *zechira* is to remember *Shabbat* and

keep it holy. The Alshich says that *Shabbat* is the one day when we can see Hashem's unified relationship with the world. On the other six days we live in a world of separateness. There's the work self and the home self and our multiple responsibilities. But on *Shabbat* we draw it all together and recognize that it's all from one source. Seeing the whole picture brings us closer to Hashem. The *mitzva* of remembering *Shabbat* is meant to take place during the week. The Arizal says that on the first three days of the week one should hold on to the sanctity of the previous *Shabbat* by talking and thinking about it and eating the leftovers. The next three days begin the process of moving towards the next *Shabbat*. Something of the unity of *Shabbat* must always be present amid the fragmentation of the week.

Remembering the six *zechirot* is an opportunity to change from the inside. Study them well and let it define you so that when this whole period is over, you'll emerge a different, better, person.

Shir Shel Yom: Shabbos Kodesh Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

"But You have raised my horn like that of an unfettered ox to soak me with oil." A horn announces the coming of the animal. It's at the top and it's strong. There were times that the nations saw our strengths and things were good. Oil makes things run. The Seforno says this refers to the generations of Moshe, Yehoshua, David Hamelech, and his son, Shlomo. These were optimum times for Klal Yisrael. Based on past historical evidence, we can believe that it can be good for us in both worlds. Hashem will destroy wickedness and the righteous will prosper. "The righteous will blossom like date trees and like a cedar tree in Levanon." The shade of a date tree is at the top, far removed from the tree. This teaches us that the reward of the righteous is there, but it could take a while to come to fruition. *Chazal* give another explanation. The date tree only gives forth fruit after many years. The cedar tree doesn't bear fruit at all. However, if you cut the bark it will grow again. This indicates that there will be reward for eternity. The Jewish people will never be

destroyed.

"We will be planted in the house of Hashem, in the courtyards of Hashem we will blossom. Even in old age it will be as if we are young; fat and fresh will we be. To declare that Hashem is upright, my rock in Whom there is no wrong." It will be an eternal life, but there will still be growth. We will be fresh and capable for eternity. At that time, it will become very clear what were the fruits that grew out of the suffering. We will recognize that all that Hashem did was justice.

Why do we recite this chapter on *Shabbat*?

The Seforno explains that Hashem created the world for a purpose. He gave us a *Tzelem Elokim* and all the capabilities to bring the world to its purpose. All that happens in this world is taking us towards that goal. We don't always understand, but we must believe based on past experiences. It's not about now, but about using the now to get to our goal. *Shabbat* is called "*Tachlit shamayim v'aretz* - The day we concentrate on the purpose." This

indicates to us that we have a mission and *Shabbat* is the day dedicated to work towards it, which in turn affects the whole week.

Why does *Shabbat* indicate purpose? Hashem created the world in six days and on *Shabbat* he rested. When a person works and then stops, it indicates he's accomplished a specific purpose. Imagine a child at play. He might play for hours putting the lego where his imagination takes him. He might say he's finished and then come back to it and continue building because his mind takes him further. But if decides to build something specific like a car, following the instructions step by step, and in the end, he says he finished, it means he's not going to build the car again. It's done and he's not coming back to it again. So too with creation. By the fact that Hashem ceased creating on *Shabbat*, He indicated that there was a purpose to the six days of creation. And *Shabbat* is the time to concentrate on that, to think about Hashem's plan, and to connect to Him.