



Wembley Synagogue

יתרו

Insights from the commentators into the Sedra of Yitro 5768

What's the Sidra about?

1st Aliya: Yitro brings Moshe's wife and two sons to join him in the desert. In 18:10, Yitro proclaims his belief in Hashem and identifies Hashem's manifest justice as the primary motive for his belief and conversion.

2nd & 3rd Aliyot: Yitro observes Moshe's daily schedule as chief administrator, judge, and teacher. He advises his son-in-law to delegate some responsibilities to a hierarchy of worthy judges and administrators. This would allow Moshe to focus his attention on those issues that demand his specific attention. Moshe listens to Yitro's advice.

4th Aliya: This begins the preparation for Revelation. It is the 1st day of Sivan, and the Bnei Yisrael have been in the desert for 43 days. Moshe is told by Hashem to explain to the nation that they are a "kingdom of priests..."

5th Aliya: Moshe tells the nation of G-d's expectations and they respond, "all that Hashem will command we will do." Moshe is further instructed to tell the people to prepare themselves and to remain apart from their spouses for three days. Mt. Sinai is to be fenced off so that no person or animal could ascend the mountain until the shofar sounded the conclusion of Revelation. On the 3rd day, Revelation began with lightning, thunder, the sounding of a shofar, and Mt. Sinai completely engulfed in clouds, smoke, and fire. Moshe led the nation to assemble at the foot of a trembling Mt.Sinai.

6th Aliya: Hashem summoned Moshe to ascend the mountain and instructed him to re-emphasise the prohibition against anyone ascending the mountain during Revelation. Moshe descends and discharges G-d's wishes. With Moshe standing among the people at the foot of the mountain, Hashem spoke the Ten Commandments to the entire people.

7th Aliya: This last Aliya describes the reaction of the nation to Revelation. In 20:19, the Pasuk factually states that the Jewish Nation collectively heard G-d speak. It is among the most fundamentally important statements in the entire Torah. The Parsha concludes with the three commandments regarding the Altar. (Source: Rav Aharon Tendler)

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וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוֹ כֹהֵן מִדְיָן, אֲבִי-יִתְרוֹ מֹשֶׁה וְכָל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְמֹשֶׁה וְלַבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְהוֹצִיאַת אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם. - And Yitro the priest of Midian, father-in-law of Moshe heard (everything that Hashem had done) (18:1) The Sidra begins with Yitro hearing all that Hashem had done for Moshe and Bnei Yisrael. Rashi quotes the Gemara Zevachim (116a) and asks what did Yitro hear that prompted him to come? He answers that Yitro heard about the splitting of the sea and the war against Amalek. Rav Eliyahu Lopian, in Lev Eliyahu, explains the point that was troubling Rashi in this verse. In order for a person to pick up and leave his home and family, we can assume that he must have heard something that others weren't privy to. Only this would explain why he, but no one else, came. What did Yitro hear?! The Rabbis explain that, in fact, Yitro heard exactly what everyone else had also heard! i.e. the splitting of the sea and the war against Amalek. Everyone else heard but didn't move. Yitro heard, was willing to turn his whole life upside down, and came to join the Jewish people. What was unique about Yitro? He was a person who was relentless in his quest for truth. He had tried serving every type of worship in the world and had found only emptiness. He was never satisfied with anything less than absolute truth. Concerning the splitting of the sea it says, (15:14) "Nations heard and trembled with fear" but next morning they were back to their old ways. None were willing to make any meaningful changes in their life. After a few days it was all but forgotten. Yitro heard and came. He made changes in his life and would never be the same person again.

Yitro - וַיָּקָם יִתְרוֹ חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה עִלָּה וּבָחִים לֵאלֹהִים וַיָּבֵא אֶתְרוֹ וְכָל זְקֵנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֶאֱכֹל-לֶחֶם עִם-חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to G-d. Aharon and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread with the father-in-law of Moshe. (18:12) Yitro was the guest. Why did Aharon and the elders not make the meal and invite him? Yitro came to visit Moshe because he wanted to convert and become a member of the Jewish people. A convert must be circumcised, and Yitro was so overjoyed at his conversion that he made a *seudat mitzvah* similar to the one usually given when a Jewish child has his *brit milah*. Aharon, together with all the elders of Israel, participated in the *seudat mitzvah*. A hint for the making of a festive meal at the time of a *brit* is found in the word "*milah*." It is an acronym for *מִשְׁתֶּה יַעֲשֶׂה לְכָל הַקָּהָל* "a meal should be made for all assembled." Another hint is in the *pasuk* — וּמִלֵּיתָהּ אֹתוֹ אִזּוֹ יֵאָכֵל בּוֹ "You shall circumcise him; then he shall eat of it" (12:44). The word "*az*" has the numerical value of 8, alluding to the custom that, following a *brit* on the eighth day, there should be a meal. (Source: Vedibarta Bam)

וְכָל-הָעָם רָאוּ אֶת-הַתְּהוֹמֹת וְאֶת-הַלְּפִידִם וְאֵת קוֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר וְאֶת-הַהֲרָרָה עֹשֶׂה - The entire people saw the thunder and the flames, the sound of the shofar and the smoking mountain (20:15) What was the purpose of this spectacle? R' Moshe Sternbuch explains with the following parable: A certain wealthy man once betrothed his daughter to a distinguished young man. They agreed that the wedding would take place in the young man's town on a certain date, and that the young couple would settle in that town. When the wedding date approached, the bride and her family set out in a golden carriage. In every town through which they passed, the bride's father spent money lavishly, and the newspapers reported on the fabulous wealth of the bride's family. In the groom's town, the bride's family was greeted as royalty. Yet the bride's father saw that the groom himself looked depressed. Asking why, he was told, "Even with your daughter's dowry, how will I ever maintain the lifestyle she is used to?" "Don't worry," said the bride's father. "My daughter and I both know that she will live a simpler life from now on. I merely arrived here in this way so that you would appreciate where she came from and always do your best to give her everything that you can." Similarly, says R' Sternbuch, the Torah is the daughter of the King of Kings, who betrothed her to common man. In order to remind us of the Torah's glorious origins, G-d gave her away amidst a spectacular show of fire and sound. (Source: Ta'am Vada'at)

וְהוֹדַעְתָּ לָהֶם אֶת-הַדֶּרֶךְ וְלָכֵי כֹה - And you shall make known to them the path in which they should go. (18:20) In the Gemara Bava Metzia 30b, Chazal interpret the words, "the path," as a reference to performing acts of loving-kindness. In his Shaarei Teshuvah 3:13, Rabbeinu Yonah asserts that tzedakah, is performed with one's money, while gemillut chasadim, acts of loving-kindness, are performed both with one's possessions and with one's body. A person should see to it that he provides assistance to his fellow man, regardless of his own personal financial standing. A smile, a nice word, a personal visit, serve this objective; it is not the monumental deeds that make the difference. Simple acts of caring can change a person's life. Chesed begins when we take notice of those around us in order to respond to their needs. (Source: Peninim on the Torah)

שבת שלום!
Shabbat Shalom!



Shabbat starts 4.22pm



Shabbat ends: 5.29pm

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