

קהל בני ישראל
זבארוב זאלאזיץ

K'HAL B'NEI YISRAEL

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Ohr Pinchas Parsha Sheet

in loving memory of Reb Pinchas Mandel, Z.L. H.K.M.

Yisro

Commentaries

Have a great and joyous Shabbos!

PARSHA COMMENTARIES

Yisro 5767

- 1) “Yisro,” 18:1 Baal HaTurim says the name *Yisro* itself teaches us about his conversion: *Yud* (10) refers to his coming to receive the 10 commandments. *Taf*, *Resh* and *Vav* (606) stands for the number of commandments added to the seven Noachide commandments given to the rest of the people.
- 2) “All that Hashem did to Moshe, and to Israel His People,” 18:1 Ohr HaChaim says the Torah points out that to begin with, Yisro was a lover of Israel. He tried to find out all the specifics of the miracles. Have you ever heard of an enemy interested in good news about his enemy - which would only bring out their praises?
- 3) “Yisro Minister of Midyan,” 18:1; “Yisro, Moshe’s father-in-law,” 18:2 Ohr HaChaim explains that at first, Yisro was honored for his position as religious leader of Midyan. This all changes in verse 2, when Yisro recognized the greatness of Hashem, Moshe, and the Children of Israel. At that time he was repelled by the title, “Minister of Midyan,” and chose instead the higher honor of, “father-in-law of Moshe.”
- 4) Kli Yakar notes that in those times, many religions mistakenly thought there were two separate divinities: one that only did good - even to evil people, and a second that only did bad - even to good people. For this reason, when Yisro only heard about all the good Hashem did for the Children of Israel, he was not influenced to accept Him as his G-d. In verse 8, however, after Moshe told him about Hashem punishing Pharaoh and his people, he was convinced that Hashem is, “greater than all the gods,” because he both rewards good and punishes evil.
- 5) Kli Yakar makes another point: by Hashem punishing evil, “measure for measure,” (as for instance when the Egyptians wanted to drown the Jewish Children in water and were therefore themselves drowned in water — See Rashi and Onkelos v. 11) this punishment was only for the good of the Jewish Children; not as revenge. This made Yisro decide to accept Hashem as his God.
- 6) “I, your father-in-law, Yisro, have come to you.” 18:6 Targum Yonatan ben Uziel says Yisro’s expression, “have come to you,” tells us he asked Moshe to convert him to Judaism. Pirush Yonatan adds that the acronym from, “*ani chosench*a Yisro,” [Heb., ‘your father-in-law Yisro’] spells *achi* [Heb. ‘my brother’]. He became a brother to all Jews, as the Sages say, “all Jewish children are brothers.”

7) *“Moshe went out to greet his father-in-law, and he bowed and kissed him, and they inquired, as one man to his friend, about each other’s wellbeing.”* 18:7 See Rashi.

Targum Yonatan ben Uziel translates this verse as follows: “And he (Yisro) bowed to Hashem when he recognized Him as now his G-d. Then Moshe kissed him and converted him to Judaism. Also the Torah’s reference to Yisro as Moshe’s “friend” (suggesting his “equal”) attests to his conversion.

8) *“And Moshe went out to greet...”* 18:7 Seforno sees in this verse an important lesson in human decency: Moshe did not worry about his own honor but instead went out to receive his father-in-law in gratitude for his helping Moshe during Moshe’s time of pain. We find the same attribute in Esther who, “adhered to Mordechai’s command.” We see it also in Joseph, who acted this way with his brothers. In the same story of Joseph, the Master of the beverages did the opposite to Joseph when he failed to speak about Joseph to Pharaoh.

9) *“And Yisro rejoiced.”* 18:9 Ohr HaChaim quotes the Targum Onkelos HaGer’s translation of the word *vayechad* to mean, “joy.” This is Aramaic. Why would the Torah use an Aramaic word here? Though the Sages [Tanchuma Yisro 11] say the Torah was given in all 70 languages, still there must be a reason the Torah doesn’t use the Holy Language, Hebrew. Or HaChaim explains: Yisro was so joyous that his flesh was affected. We find that when one hears greatly joyous news one can faint or even be put into a life-threatening situation (as when Jacob was told Joseph is still alive). This is something every person can attest to. “Here too, though Yisro had heard about the miracles in general, when Moshe related the intricate details -- especially the angel representing the Egyptians wanting to kill them, and Hashem’s rescuing them -- this had a physical effect on him in a most positive way.

10) *“And Hashem rescued them.”* 18:8 Seforno says the reason Hashem rescued them was because of their unity to worship Him in deed and in thought.

11) *“Sacrifices...”* 18:12 Seforno says the sacrifices were brought as Yisro’s way of saying he would never sacrifice to any other god again, and that he was taking upon himself, “the yoke of the Heavenly Kingdom of Hashem.”

12) *“I will advise you.”* 18:18 Ohr HaChaim asks why a former minister of Midyan would be teaching a lesson in leading the Jewish Children. He answers that Hashem wanted to teach a lesson to that

generation, and to the future generations. The nations might have scholars even wiser than our scholars. We must realize that Hashem chose us to be His chosen People not because of our degree of wisdom, but rather out of His kindness to us, and His love for our ancestors. For this we must praise him.

13) Ch. 19 Or HaChaim points out three crucial basic prerequisites for one to receive the Torah:

- ✦ One must work hard and not be lazy;
- ✦ One must be humble;
- ✦ One must study with others, *“as one person; with one heart.”*

14) *“I carried you on wings of eagles.”* 19:4 Ibn Ezra explains that the eagle flies higher than all other birds; for this reason, all other birds fear the eagle, and yet the eagle itself is fearless.

15) *“You will be a treasure (segulah) to me.”* 19:5 Ibn Ezra explains ‘treasure’ to mean something respected and admired, and of which there is no another in existence.

16) *“You will be a treasure to me from among all the nations because all the earth is mine.”* 29:5 Ohr HaChaim explains that just as kings have precious items that have no practical function, so Hashem declares, “because the whole earth is Mine,” (and not because of any practical explanation).

17) 19:5 Seforno explains that Hashem says, “If you will accept the Torah and accept My commandments, keep the covenant [referenced also in P’Mishpatim after their saying, “We will do...”] then even though the whole human race is more precious to Me than the rest of My creation (which is on a lower level) still the Jewish Children will be even more precious. Also, the loyal humans among the human race are without question precious.

18) *“Kingdom of priests,”* 19:6 Baal HaTurim explains this to mean that if the Jewish Children had merited, they would all have been high priests. After Moshiach comes, this will become a reality.

19) *“And brought you to Me...”* 19:4 Targum Yonatan ben Uziel says Hashem brought them on clouds, like on an eagle (See #1 above) to the Temple, to bring a Passover sacrifice and then in a short time returned them to Ramses.