

Parashat YITRO- 2013, 5773

Our parasha opens with Yitro, the high priest of Midyan, who is the father-in-law of Moshe Rabbeinu, coming to meet his son-in-law, the exalted and revered leader of Bnei Yisrael. Together with him he brings his daughter Tziporah, Moshe's wife, and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer.

Usually we would expect a husband and father, having been separated from his family for some time and now reunited, to unhesitatingly run out to greet his wife, and to embrace his children with open arms, and then politely acknowledge his father-in-law. But that's not the way it happened, Moshe reveals to us a whole different model; the pasuk states, {18:7} "Moshe went out to greet his father-in-law, he bowed down and he kissed him" Rather than merely acknowledging his father-in-law, he runs to show him honor and respect.

Moshe's behavior towards Yitro is not a onetime occurrence, but rather a steady pattern. At the beginning of Sefer Shemot, we already are exposed to this unique relationship. After accepting the mission given to him by HaShem to lead the Jewish people out of Mitzrayim, Moshe Rabbeinu returns home to consult with Yitro [4:18] and to gather up his family. One would think that upon speaking to G-d, receiving a unique mission to save the Jewish people, he would hurriedly gather his family and leave without any consultation. However, Moshe goes to receive permission from his father-in-law to take leave. Even though, as Rashi points out that Moshe swore not to leave Midyan without Yitro's approval, I would have thought that a direct tzivui from HaShem telling him to leave would override any oath. Nevertheless, the pasuk states that "Moshe went to Yitro his father-in-law, and asked, can I please go, and return to my brothers in Mitzrayim, and see if they are still living, and Yitro responds,-go in peace"

We find another example of this type of interaction between Moshe Rabbeinu and Yitro. After Matan Torah, Moshe the leader of Klal Yisrael was involved day and night serving as a judge and answering questions for the entire nation of Israel. Yitro observes this and says: "Why are you sitting by yourself while all the nation stands before you from morning until evening...this is not good what you are doing...this is too much for you to do alone" [18:14-18]. Moshe could have said, "Listen my dear shver [father-in-law], you stick to being a high priest of Midyan and I will do my avodat HaKodesh". In other words, don't tell *me* what to do! He did not say those words, and the Torah tells us, "And Moshe *heard* the voice of his father-in-law, and he did everything he said" [18:24]. Targum Onklus translates the word "va'yish'ma" he heard as "ve'kabeil" and he accepted. Moshe Rabbeinu listened to and accepted everything that his father-in-law suggested.

Moshe Rabbeinu set an enormously high standard for Jewish sons-in-law for all generations. For many young married men and women, there is a tendency to deal with in-laws with rebelliousness, but upon reviewing our parasha we see that this is not the Torah way. Like Moshe Rabbeinu, married children can have a beautiful relationship

with in-laws if dealt with humility and respect. If children humble themselves by giving proper *kavod* to in-laws, they can be walking in the lofty footsteps of Moshe Rabbeinu.

I write these words as a tribute to my father-in-law whose yahrtzeit is this Motza'ei Shabbat, the 23 of Shevat, Mordechai ben Shlomo, Mr. Max Lewko, A'H. Those who knew him will certainly agree that he possessed tremendous leadership talents with which he led the Religious Zionists of America, right after the establishment of Medinat Yisrael. He was highly respected and regarded both here in the United States and in Israel. When he spoke, people listened and accepted and I am proud to be his son-in-law. *Te'hei Nafsho Tze'rura Biztror Ha-Chayim.*