

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE

TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 17

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YITHRO

20th Shevat 5776

Kohen - First Aliya: Chapter 18, verses 1 - 12

- When Yithro (Jethro), the priest of Midian and Moshe's father in law heard about all the miracles Hashem had done for Bnai Yisrael; he left Midian along with Moshe's wife and two children to meet up with Moshe.
- Upon hearing the account of how Hashem had delivered Bnai Yisrael out of Mitzraim (Egypt), Yithro offered up korbanos (sacrifices) to show his gratitude and acceptance that Hashem is truly the one and only G-d.

Levi - Second Aliya: Chapter 18, verses 13 - 23

- Yithro observed how Moshe spent the majority of his days, judging all the people. So he advises him to create a judicial system for the menial disputes, so Moshe can concentrate and deal exclusively with the more difficult problems.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya: Chapter 18, verses 24 - 27

- Moshe heeded Yithro's advice and chose the most qualified men to assist him with his new service to judge the people.
- Yithro says farewell to Moshe and heads back to his homeland alone.

R'Vi'i - Fourth Aliya: Chapter 19, verses 1 - 6

- Three months after leaving Mitzraim, Bnai Yisrael arrive at the base of Mount Sinai.
- Moshe ascends the mountain where Hashem tells him, if his people will obey his commandments they will become a kingdom of Kohanim (Cohen's) and henceforth be known as Hashem's holy nation.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya: Chapter 19, verses 7 - 19

- Moshe repeats Hashem's words to the Bnai Yisrael and they all cry out in unison, 'Naaseh Vnishma' (We will do and we will listen).
- Moshe tells the people to purify themselves and commands them not to touch the mountain because in three days' time, Hashem is going to descend onto the mountain to address them all personally.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya: Chapter 19, verse 20 – Chapter 20, verse 14

- With the sound of a Shofar (ram's horn) loudly ringing out, thunder and lightning enveloped the whole mountain as Hashem descended down immersed in a huge fiery cloud.
- For the first time ever Hashem's voice is heard in full clarity by every single person present, as Hashem recites the Ten Statements. (ten commandments) to them.

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya: Chapter 20, verses 15 - 23

- Bnai Yisrael tremble in fear, as they witness the greatest ever event in Jewish history.
- They request Moshe to address them instead of Hashem as they feared they might die if Hashem continued speaking to them.
- Moshe enters the smoking cloud where the divine presence is waiting for him to receive two stone tablets for which the ten statements were inscribed in written form.
- Hashem relates to Moshe additional laws, which correlates into the 613 mitzvahs we know of today.

Haftorah –

YISHAYAH (ISAIAH) Chapter 6, verse 1 to Chapter 7, verse 6 and Chapter 9, verses 5 & 6

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ This week's Haftorah recounts the famed vision known as Maaseh Hamerkavah - the vision of Hashem as he sits upon his throne of glory.
- ✚ Yishayah prophesies the eventual destruction of Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) and goes to King Achaz, to warn him and not to fear because the enemy alliance will not win the upcoming battle.
- ✚ Yishayah's prophecy continues that Chizkiyahu, will succeed the throne and will be crowned as "The Prince of Peace," returning the Jewish people back to an unprecedented devotion and commitment to Torah observance.

GEMATRIA LINKED TO THE SEDRA:

- ✚ Hashem informs Moshe that he will come (אבוא) and bless those who mention his divine name.
- ✚ As the word אבוא has a numerical value of 10. It must infer that Hashem will only do this when a Minyan of at least 10 people are present.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

This week's Torah portion, describes the biggest event of all time - where Hashem revealed Himself to Bnai Yisrael, presented them with his most precious gift. (The Torah) and recited the Ten Commandments from his own lips for everyone to hear. If we had been consulted on what this Parsha should be called, to mark such a significant event. we may have suggested the name "Parsha Har Sinai," or maybe "Parsha Luhot Ha'brit" (The Tablets of the Covenant). But no, instead the Sedra is named after someone who was not at all even seeming to be connected to this special historical and unprecedented event in which an entire nation experienced a rare one-time communal revelation from Hashem face to face and took upon themselves to listen and obey his every word and command by claiming Naaseh Vnishma (We will do and we will listen.) Apart from being Moshe's father-in-law, who exactly was Yithro, and why was he privileged to have this particular Parsha named after him?

What I find interesting that the Parsha begins with the story of Yithro's arrival in the desert with the following words: "Now Yithro heard of all that Hashem had done for Moshe, and for Israel; His people, how the Lord had brought them out of Mitzraim" (Exodus 18:1). Imagine if this episode occurred in our modern times today. Such a news story relating to an entire nation of slaves being liberated by means of super-natural phenomena like the 10 plagues and the parting of the Red Sea on their behalf, would have captured the front pages of all the newspapers globally and would have created such a social media frenzy, the likes nobody would have experienced before since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Everyone would be posting online their views or reporting on twitter their opinions of what they may have witnessed or heard with maybe a few selfies thrown in proving they were actually there and witnessed the whole thing. Surely! even in living in ancient times, Yithro could not have been the only person to have heard about the exodus from Egypt. So why was he singled out above the rest?

The story of a nation of slaves being freed had made an impact on the entire ancient world, as we learned from last week's Parsha of Beshalach: The entire ancient world was so stirred up by these miraculous and surprising occurrences, that although they 'heard' what happened, they did nothing and just went on living their lives as before. Not so with Yithro, he was the only one who did not listen and go on, but took the news to heart and internalized that this was only the start and something else big was about to happen, something worth checking out up close and personal for himself.

The Torah tells us from the start that as soon as he heard, Yithro travelled from his home country of Midian to be with the Nation of Israel who were currently camped at the foot of Mount Sinai. The sages of the Talmud say that what really caused Yithro to take this momentous and historical step, to leave his home and his land in order to experience the events himself was that even before any of these phenomena occurred, he was busy and occupying his time and efforts in seeking out the truth. Yithro had studied all the religions that were familiar to him and had worshiped every kind of idolatry popular in his time but he was not content. He was missing something, and yearned to find that vital piece of truth to enable him to live in the right path and now he found it. The Sages explain it was due to this wonderful trait, Yitro was able to sharpen his senses to hear and pay attention to the fact that the exodus from Mitzraim was an event worthy of seeing from up close.

This week's Parsha, which deals with the tremendous historical event of the Revelation at Mount Sinai, and is named for that same special man who dedicated his life, searching and examining the true path to live by and follow. This is to teach us that in order to merit the correct way of life offered to us by the Torah, we must not despair. We must examine, probe and search incessantly for the right path on which we should embark. If we can follow the footsteps of this special man, Yithro, we will be able to find the best way of life and the beauty concealed in the words of Hashem and truly be worthy of receiving and accepting Hashem's most precious gift. The Torah!

