



# OD YOSEF HAI NEWSLETTER

ROSH YESHIVAH AND COMMUNITY RABBI  
DAYAN ABRAHAM DAVID SHLI"TA

OD YOSEF HAI  
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## **Thoughts on YITRO**

**Year 24**

**by Dayan Abraham David**

Moshe welcomes Yitro his father-in-law into the camp in the desert and honours him. He describes to Yitro details of all the miracles and happenings that G-d has done for the Israelites to save them both in Egypt from Paroah and the miracles for them in the desert. Yitro rejoices on their behalf for their salvation. He then makes a blessing; Blessed be G-d who has saved you from the hands of the Egyptians and Paroah. The Talmud in Berachot learns out from here that a person is obliged to make a beracha on a miracle that has happened to him when he sees the place where it happened. Or if he passes a place where a miracle has happened to the Jewish People he makes a beracha, a blessing in praise of G-d who has done it for His people. We learn a halacha from the actions of Yitro a non-Jew and the credit he is given for it. Our Sages even criticise somewhat the Bnei Yisrael saying '*Gana hu leMoshe ve shishim ribbo she lo amru baruch ad she ba Yitro ve amar Baruch Hashem*'. It is a slight on

Moses and the 600,000 that no one made such a beracha until Yitro came along and did so. We may ask but the Bnei Yisrael did say the Shira after Kriat Yam Suf? Perhaps there is a difference between the Shira which was a collective praise and rejoicing at the time of the miracle whereas the beracha on a *nes* is a personal thanksgiving and recognition and blessing to the Creator to remember what He has done for us in the past. And Yitro was the first.

After hearing all the details of the miracles Yitro praises G-d saying now I know Hashem is greater than all the powers of the world for punishing the Egyptians for all the wickedness they have done to Yisrael '*Asher zadu alehem*'. The Targum translates the word '*Zadu alehem*' differently to mean for their thoughts; '*Pitgama de chashibu mitzrei lemidan yat Yisrael be daninun*'. The Egyptians were punished for their thoughts and plots they had against the Israelites not just the deeds. When given the details of the punishment by Moshe, Yitro who had been in the council as an advisor of Paroah, knew of the plots and thoughts Paroah and his servants intended against the Bnei Yisrael

and understood how the punishments given to the Egyptians repaid them for their bad intentions as well. Things the Bnei Yisrael could not know about he could appreciate. In the Hallel we say '*Halelu Hashem kol goyim, shabechu hu kol haamim*'. Let the non Jewish world praise G-d and the people of the world His virtues. Why the nations and not us? Our Rabbis explain that there are many salvations we are not aware of. Our enemies plot against us and G-d foils their plots so only they know and they can praise G-d for they see His Hand in helping and saving us.

Perhaps that is why Yitro was able to appreciate the great salvation for he had a greater recognition of the great love G-d has for His people, to punish their enemies even for their bad intentions. Today we too can appreciate how G-d foils the intentions of our enemies and saves us from the vast majority who look forward to our downfall. There is a story of a non Jewish Duke who told from Rabbi Chaim Velozin about how they had plotted in secret and G-d had foiled their plot which the Jews knew nothing about.

## **TORAH GEMS**

The Pasuk tells us that the Bnei Yisrael came to the desert of Sinai on Rosh Chodesh Sivan for '*Kabalat HaTorah*', '*Ba Yom Haze Ba uh Midbar Sinai*'. The next Pasuk says '*Vayisu Me-Redfidim Vayabouh Midbar Sinai*', and they left Refidim and came to the Desert of Sinai. This should have been written before the

previous Pasuk that tells us they came to Midbar Sinai on Rosh Chodesh. The Or Hahayim answers that the Pasukim of '*Vayisu Me-Redfidim*' and those that follow are not referring to the physical journey of the Bnei Yisrael but to the spiritual progress towards '*Matan Torah*'. He explains that there are three conditions necessary for the successful study of the Torah indicated here: The first '*Vayisu Me-Redfidim*' they left Refidim, a reference to '*Rifyon Yad*' a loss of resolve where they had let themselves go, now they had strengthened themselves with animation and got away from lethargy and a spirit of laziness for Torah demands diligence and effort as the Talmud says: '*La Myminim Ba Sama DeChay*', for those who put their might referred to by the right hand the stronger one, in effort it brings 'Life'. Only when we animate ourselves and study with diligence and effort will we perceive the true understanding of the Torah. The second condition indicated by '*Vayachanu Bamidbar*' they encamped in the desert, which is superfluous since it was obvious that they would have to encamp there, comes to teach us that a person needs to make himself as humble as a desert and open to be trodden upon by all i.e. no presumptions or pretensions and a willingness to learn Torah from any teacher '*Mikol Melamdai Hischalti*'. There are those who are deterred from going to a '*chavruta*' or a '*shiur*' because of the age of the teacher or social standing of the '*chavruta*'. Our Rabbis warn us of this, '*Ain HaTorah Mitkayam Ele Le Mi She Ose Utzmo Hefker Kemidbar*'.

The Perkai Eliezer goes into great detail as to how Rabbi Akiva, who

started learning Torah at the age of forty, had to study with young children the beginnings of the alphabet but then went on to become one of our greatest Sages and teachers of the Torah. '*Vayichan Sham Yisrael Negeed Hahar*' and they encamped opposite the mountain, here the singular is used for encamping as 'one'. The Midrash explains '*Ke Ish Ehad Be Lev Ehad*', like one person with one heart, they were completely united, caring for each other's encamping needs as for their own. It is not the same for an individual to study Torah as it is for a group, unity is essential. The Torah is enhanced when more minds get together. The '*Masoret*' of our Torah was handed down in Batai Midrashot where our Sages and Rabbis got together to give us the Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi, Toseftah, etc.

## **STORIES OF TZADDIKIM**

Rabbi Mordecai of Neschiz was hardly a man of means, so he would put away pennies every day in order to be able to buy an etrog for Succot which was often quite costly. Several days before the holiday, he joyously made his way to purchase the coveted etrog, for which he had saved all year with great anticipation.

On the way he came across a man sitting at the roadside, weeping. When Rabbi Mordechai inquired as to the reason for his grief the man replied that he made his living by peddling or hauling loads with his horse and wagon. The day before, his nag died. "I have no way to earn anything and I have a large family to feed", he wailed.

With a great mitzvah clearly at hand, Rabbi Mordechai asked him how much money he needed to buy another horse and the sum turned out to be just what he had saved for his precious etrog. Without a second thought and with all the enthusiasm he had reserved for his etrog he handed the man the bag of coins he had collected, saying: "Here, go buy yourself a horse!" The stunned man could hardly believe his ears and after heaping blessings on Rabbi Mordecai, ran off excitedly to the horse dealer.

Rabbi Mordecai watched the man take off with his year's savings. "Well", he mused; "Tomorrow all Jews will rejoice over an etrog. As for myself, I will rejoice over a horse!" Truly, can we compare anyone else's mitzvah to Rabbi Mordecai's?

## ***Shabbat Shalom***

### **HALACHOT**

1) We learn from the blessings Yitro made in the parasha that when we see a place where a miracle was made for Am Yisrael, the whole Jewish nation, we make a beracha: '*She asa nisim leavotenu bamakom haze*'. But we must see the exact place i.e. we cannot make the beracha on the whole Red Sea or all the Jordan River only where the Bnei Yisrael crossed. Today it would be possible to make such a beracha at the excavations of the walls of Jericho.

2) When a person sees the place a miracle happened to him only, he or his descendants born after the event may make the beracha with '*Shem u Malchut*'. When he does make such a beracha he includes and mentions any other miracles which happened to him.

3) This beracha is only said on a miraculous escape outside the boundaries of nature, i.e. if he was attacked by a bear or lion and survived. Or a roof or a wall fell upon him and under normal circumstances he should have been killed he makes the special beracha: *She asa li nes bamakom haze'*, whenever he sees that place after an interval of 30 days.

4) However, if he was held up by armed men or a heavy stone fell near him, which might have killed if it struck him he does not say this beracha, this is not called out of the boundaries of nature.

5) If he was shot at or stabbed (*lo alenu*) and it only hit or penetrated his arms or legs missing his actual torso or head then he makes the beracha without '*Shem*' and '*Malchut*' and thinks it in his heart

6) The beracha should not be confused with Birchat HaGomel which has other criterion.

**David Douer followed by a kiddush**

***Avot vu banim is one and a half hours after Shabbat  
Please try to attend***

***If you wish to sponsor a Kiddush***

***Please contact  
Nathaniel Bendayan  
07825 871749***

***For Seuda Shlishit  
or to rent the***

***Nancy Reuben Hall  
for a Simcha***

***Please contact  
Yanky David 07725 408724***

### **SHABBAT TIMES**

Shabbat commences	4:21 pm
Shabbat terminates	5:33 pm
Mincha Erev Shabbat	4:05 pm
Followed by Kabbalat Shabbat	
Shacharit	8:30 am
Mincha on Shabbat followed by Seuda Shlishit & Arbit	3:55 pm
Shacharit Weekdays with netz	7:05 am
Shacharit Sundays with netz	7:05 am
Mincha	1:30 pm
Arbit	7:30 pm

**We have a regular Youth  
Minyan organised by**