

## Echoes of the Ages

"ויספר משה לחתנו את כל-אשר עשה ה' לפרעה ולמצרים על אודת ישראל את כל-התלאה אשר מצאתם בדרך ויצלם ה'" - שמות יח : ח

Moshe told his father-in-law all the troubles that had befallen them on the way, and that Hashem had rescued them.

Years ago, when anti-Semitism was rampant in the former Soviet Union, R' Moshe Feinstein submitted a request for permission to emigrate away from the life-threatening danger. After being turned down multiple times by the government, he decided he had to find a new way to attempt to obtain a visa.

R' Moshe's uncle was a wealthy man who had already managed to escape over the border. After turning down the offer of freedom in return for information on his uncle's whereabouts, the Rav decided he had to make a journey to the capital. And so, dressed in farmer's clothes, he slipped into Moscow illegally in order to try and gain a visa to get out the country.

After finding a non-Jewish family kind enough to take him in, R' Moshe spent every minute not used trying to get a visa on learning תורה in a local בית המדרש, surviving on nothing but potatoes and water. There he mingled with the other Jews, trying hard not to be singled out by the authorities.

One night, the Rav got so absorbed in his learning that he did not notice the hours pass. He decided he could not return to his lodgings, for he would definitely wake someone up at this late hour and attract unwanted attention to himself. He decided to spend the rest of the night learning in the בית המדרש instead.

The next morning he received news that the secret police had searched all the houses in the neighbourhood. They were looking for people who had crept into the city illegally and were under orders to arrest any perpetrators. By showing compassion to his hosts, R' Moshe was spared a cold prison cell and possibly his life.

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## Unity and Love

"זישמע יתרו כהן מדין חתן משה את כל אשר עשה אלקים למשה ולישראל עמו" - שמות יח : א

"And Yisro the Priest of Midian, the father-in-law of משה, heard all that G-d had done for משה and Israel His people." - *Shemos 18:1*

On these words, רש"י explains that יתרו heard about the splitting of the sea, and of the war with עמלק. רש"י comments that this was what had inspired him to come to join ישראל. This raises an interesting question - what is specific about these two incidents, and what do they have in common? In his book Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser explains that all the Jews were united in the war against עמלק as one people, who were all fighting a common enemy. At קריאת ים סוף, there were actually twelve divisions. Although each שבט crossed the sea through its own channel, ה' made another נס so that the walls were transparent, in order to allow all the tribes to see each other whilst they crossed. One possible reason for this may be that it was in order to allow each שבט to see that all the neighbouring tribes

were actually passing through the sea.

This is what impressed יתרו. The idea of the Jewish people exemplifying the idea of כאיש אחד really attracted him to Judaism. Through these occurrences יתרו understood how this is true of the בני ישראל.

It is also interesting to note that the two demonstrations of unity, through which יתרו was so impressed, are followed by the awe-inspiring episode of the giving of the עשרת הדיברות. There again, רש"י comments how בני ישראל were stresses and exemplifies how close בני ישראל were to each other.

To demonstrate this point further, the גמטריא of אהבה (love) is thirteen. This is equal to the גמטריא of אחד, which is also thirteen, showing how אהבה can create one unified nation. Even more than that, when you add the gematrias of אהבה and אחד together, you get 26 which is also the numerical value of ה' name.

**By Boruch Samson**

## When A Defendant Is Not A Defendant

"כי-יהיה להם דבר בא אלי ושפטני בין איש ובין רעהו והודעתי את-חקי האלקים, ואת-תורתיו" - שמות יח : טז

"When they have a matter, one comes to me, and I judge between a man and his fellow" - *Shemos 18:16*

Here משה רבינו is explaining to his father-in-law יתרו why he is so busy attending to בני ישראל. They present to him their problems, and Moshe resolves the disputes and lays down the Torah law. R' Meir Shapiro, Rosh Yeshiva of Chachmei Lublin and founder of דף יומי, poses the following question in his ספר "אמרי דעת".

Why does משה say "בא אלי", "one comes to me"? Surely this singular expression should actually be plural, namely "באו אלי", "they come to me", as there are two litigants in every court case! Furthermore, why does the פסוק write, "בין איש ובין רעהו", that משה judges between a man and his fellow (literally friend)? On the contrary, two opposing sides in a dispute are not friends, but virtual enemies. Surely the פסוק should be phrased "בין איש לאיש", that משה judges between "man and man"?

R' Shapiro answers with a story he heard from his grandfather R' Shmuel Yitzchok Shorr, author of תני"ך on מנחת שאי. Two men once came to be judged by R' Shlomo Kluger, the מנחת שאי's Rebbe. The first related his case, but when the second party started to present his side, R' Kluger shouted that he should get out, since he was not the real defendant. Both men fled the

house in terror.

The story behind the story was as follows: one of the 'defendants' was involved in a dispute with a business partner. They decided to go to R' Yosef Shaul Nathanson to resolve the case. This man deviously attempted to check if he would win the case, so he plotted with a friend to act out the part of the man he was disputing with in order to get a "preview" verdict from R' Kluger. The man reasoned that if he won his experimental case, he would present the genuine one to R' Nathanson. R' Kluger, however, realised that the two defendants were not truthful.

The פסוק says, "כי- יהיה להם דבר", when there will be a dispute between two people, "בא אלי", only one will come, meaning that one of the defendants is a deceitful third party. Then "ושפטני בין איש ובין רעהו", I will inquire, says משה, if the two men are really against each other, or if one has dishonestly brought a friend to impersonate his opponent. Hence "ושפטני צדק" really implies "ושפטתי", that I will judge righteously, so it will be possible to discover that only one party is truly a defendant, the other being his "רעהו", friend and accomplice.

**By Yedidya Livingstone**

### Quote of the Week

"If you have gained knowledge, what do you lack? And if you lack knowledge, what have you gained?" - ויקרא רבה

## A Tale Of Two Miracles

"וישמע יתרו כהן מדין חתן משה את כל אשר עשה אלקים למשה ולישראל עמו" - שמות יח : א

"And Yisro the Priest of Midian, the father-in-law of משה, heard all that G-d had done for משה and Israel His people." - *Shemos 18:1*

We see יתרו points out that קריעת ים סוף had heard about the מלחמת עמלק, and it was these events that prompted him to come to מדין. The first event - קריעת ים סוף - was a spectacular נס that extended far beyond the realms of human comprehension. Indeed, the מעם לועז explains that the נס was comprised of 50 separate נסים, and the מכילתא קריעת ים סוף adds that a שפחה at ים סוף saw even more of ה' 's majesty than יחזקאל בן בוזי did in his visions! Therefore, this first נס could have caused a person to be מתגייר. Perhaps the second occurrence - the conversion of משה's friend - is badly chosen. Surely it would be more correct to talk of the 'the victory over Amalek'? What was so special about the former event that it justified comparison with the קריעת ים סוף and played an equal part in יתרו's conversion?

R' Eliyahu Lopian זצ"ל writes that in order to understand the importance of the מלחמת עמלק one

can compare it to a contemporary example. Prior to the Second World War, Germany was seen as one of the most cultured and advanced countries in the world. The fact that such a leading nation could lower itself to such inhumane fanatical genocide was seen as being unbelievable at the time. The Nazis clearly demonstrated that they had no concept of אמונה in ה'. It was this feeling of uncivilised degeneration displayed by the Nazis that caused many committed atheists to become תשובה בעלי.

Similarly, at the time of the עשר מכות, there were still those who overlooked the miracles, believing that it was mere כישוף - witchcraft. But once קריעת ים סוף occurred, the גמא (זבחים קטו.) notes that all the nations of the world heard about the נס and feared בני ישראל as a result. Therefore, the fact that בני ישראל could still come and fight against בני ישראל after such a powerful נס must demonstrate that they still lacked a fundamental אמונה in ה'! It was this idea that had a profound effect on יתרו and ultimately had such importance in bringing about his conversion to yiddishkeit.

**By Dov Smith  
Ex-Head Boy of Hasmo**

### Riddle of the Week

Where in davening are there 24 words in a row ending with the letter "ך"?

**Last week's riddle:** Which three people mentioned in the תורה said ברוך ה "Blessed is Hashem"?

**Answer:** אברהם and יתרו (Bereishis 9:26, 24:27, Shmos 18:10). אבימלך, לון (with a Shvah), meaning Blessed of Hashem (Bereshis 24:31, 26:29).