

Haftarah Weekly

Shabbat Yitro – Askenazim, Yeshayah 6:1 – 7:6, 9:5 – 9:6

In the beginning of this weeks Haftarah, Yeshayah shows us a vision of the the Ma'aseh Merkavah, the Vision of the Heavenly Chariot, which is also seen by Yechezkel in more detail. Yeshayah's prophecies include a vision of Hashem and His heavenly throne surrounded by angels'. "Fiery angels stand before Hashem in service ... they call to one another and say in unison, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is Hashem the master of the legions whose glory fills the entire world'" (6:2,3). Yet, Yeshayah responds very humbly. "Woe to me for I remained silent because I am a man of impure lips...and my eyes beheld the Divine Presence itself." (6:5). The Radak explains that Yeshayah was troubled by his personal silence during those lofty moments that he was unable to participate in the angels' glorious praise. He attributed this to his personal imperfection and on his speech that he said was impure and sinful which made him unworthy of uttering a sound in Hashem's holy presence.

The vision continues with Hashem commanding one of his Serafim to give Yeshayah a burning coal. Then Yeshayah is cleansed by the coal touching his lips. "And with tongs the angel removed the coal from the altar, touched my mouth and said...'Your sin is removed and your error forgiven.'" (6:6,7). This is explained by some to be a forgiveness for Yeshayah's sin of the mouth, and to make him fitting to be a prophet. This is so, as the next passuk writes: "I heard the voice of my L-rd saying, 'Who shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said 'Here I am! Send me!'"

The vision of the coals also is explained to be the eventual destruction of the Beit Hamikdash and of the Kingdom of Yehudah. Hashem then tells Yeshayah to tell this vision of eventual destruction to the people even though they will not heed the call for Teshuva. And to the question of how

long this will last from Yeshayah i.e. how long the people's hearts will be heavy and not listen, Hashem responds "... Until cities become desolate, and houses without a person, and the land becomes desolate and wasted... there will be ten more kings".

This sounds very bleak and miserable, but there is still a hope for the future. The Serafim (fiery angels) held the burning coal with tongs. This suggests that the coal's heat was too intense for an angel to hold. On the other hand, Yeshayah's lip endured direct contact with the coal, and he wasn't harmed. Rashi quotes the Rabbis who explain that a human being's potential truly surpasses the status of an angel. This connects to this week's sedra. The Midrash says that at the time of Matan Torah, the angels complained to Hashem for choosing the Jewish People to receive the Torah. They argued, "Your Torah should remain among the Heavenly beings. They are holy and Your Torah is holy, they are pure and Your Torah is pure and they are everlasting and Your Torah is also." Hashem responded that the Torah could not remain amongst them because they are perfect spiritual beings with no mortality, impurity or illness. Hashem's true glory would ultimately come from man plagued by impurity and mortality.

Even the Serafim have no comparison to the potential of every person. People that overcome all the worldly lures and the hardship of life, by serving G-d are a people worthy of receiving the holy Torah that the Serafim so crave. This is why it is so important to tell of the vision, even when people don't listen, because Hashem is always calling out to His people to repent and is always waiting for someone's sincere Teshuva.

Adapted from Torah.org

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עלוי נשמת ר' אליהו רחמים בן מאיר דוד ע"ה ואחיו ר' עבדאללה פרג בן מאיר דוד ע"ה
No. 272 Parshas Yisro 5768 פרשת יתרו תשס"ח מס' רעב

Commanded to Do

כבד את אביך ואת אמך

Honour your father and your mother... (Shemos 20:12)

Rav Eliezer was asked in Kiddushin (31a) how far the mitzvah of honouring one's father and mother extends. He answered: 'Go and see what one non-Jew did for his father in Ashkelon, the son's name being Dama Ben Nesinah.

The Chachomim wanted to buy stones for the Ephod from Dama Ben Nesinah at a price that would give him a profit of 600 000 gold dinars. But the key to the chest that contained the precious stones was lying under his father's pillow and his father was sleeping at the time. Despite the enormous profit, Dama Ben Nesinah did not disturb his father. The next year Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave Dama Ben Nesinah his reward – a *Parah Adumah* was born in his herd (for which the Chachomim would pay 'all the money in the world').

R' Chanina on this story notes that if one who performs a Mitzvah without having been commanded to do so receives such a reward (Dama Ben Nesinah was a non-Jew and honouring parents is not one of the *שבע מצות בני נח* that non-Jews are obliged to keep), then one who performs a Mitzvah having been commanded to do so, how much more so does he receive a reward!

This is based on a principle in Jewish law that R' Chanina taught that one who performs a Mitzvah having been commanded to do so is greater than one who performs a Mitzvah without having been commanded his principle is not obvious – the Ba'alei Tos'fos explain that someone who does a Mitzvah due to an obligation is always worried about being under pressure that he may not fulfil the Mitzvah. Therefore since in such circumstances it is more difficult for a person to perform the Mitzvah, his reward is greater.

The Gemoro (Bava Kama 87a) relates that according to Rabbi Yehuda, a blind person is exempt from observing Mitzvos, while the Chachomim disagree. At first Rav Yosef who was blind felt that he would receive greater reward if Rabbi Yehuda's view was accepted. This is because Rav Yosef observed the Mitzvos despite the fact that he thought he wasn't obliged to and it seemed logical to Rav

Yosef that to perform Mitzvos even though one is exempt must be of greater merit. However, following what R' Chanina said above (the opposite view that greater reward is given to one who is obliged in Mitzvos), Rav Yosef declared that if someone could prove to him that blind people are obliged to perform Mitzvos, then he would 'make a holiday for the Rabbis'. Interestingly, the Yam Shel Shlomo (a commentary by the Maharshah) points out that this is the only source in Shas for making a Seudas Mitzvah for a Barmitzvah. This is because of Rav Yosef's comment that the moment it was proved to him that he was obliged in Mitzvos was a moment worth celebrating (as his reward would be that much greater), so it must also be the case with a Barmitzvah.

In fact it could be argued that a Barmitzvah boy has even more of a reason to make a Seudah. Rav Yosef was prepared to make a party for **finding out** that he was obliged in Mitzvos, even though he actually entered his obligation much before, when he was Barmitzvah. A Barmitzvah boy who actually is **entering** the obligation should make a party to celebrate this great privilege and milestone.

This teaches us that entering the obligation of mitzvos is not a burden (as it may be thought) but rather a privilege. Imagine a person who trains and works hard to make the grade of joining a top Premiership football club. He's beaten thousands of his peers who were rejected. Now he has to regularly get up early (including weekends), go on long runs, perform thousands of arduous exercises day after day, week after week. If you were to ask him "isn't it a big burden to do this routine?" he will look at you as though you are crazy and respond with a resounding "What? Don't you realise that I battled hard to be in this situation? It is a great privilege to be part of a Premiership side, not a burden. We too have to realise our privilege of being in this elite Premiership group of Hashem's people. Furthermore, to **remain** a top premiership team player you must never falter, not for one moment or relegation beckons for you and your team; so it is with Jewish practice, one must never regress.

Written by Daniel Pascoe

Words of the Wise

R' Isser Zalman Meltzer was a Rav from Mir in Belarus. Born in 1870, he eventually became the Rosh Yeshiva of Eitz Chaim Yeshiva in Yerushalayim. The following story occurred during his time as Rosh Yeshiva in Yerushalayim.

One winter evening he was walking home with his nephew after ma'ariv. This was one of those rare evenings where the temperature was such that it had started snowing. They were walking up the stairs to R' Isser Zalman's flat when he suddenly stopped and turned around. He walked back down the stairs and stopped in the foyer, then started pacing. His nephew enquired as to what was the matter, but the Rebbe just shook his head without answering.

After ten minutes of relentless pacing he walked back up the stairs again to his door, only to

return to the foyer once more. By now the cold had penetrated the sturdy doors of the lobby. As the Rebbe resumed his pacing, his nephew once again asked why the Rebbe had travelled up the stairs twice only to turn back again.

This time R' Isser Zalman answered him. "Once a week our cleaning lady comes to the flat. When I walked up the stairs I heard her singing and realised she was there, so I walked back down to wait for her to finish. I know that she finds it easier to work when she sings, but if I had been there she would have been embarrassed to sing in front of me. That's why I was waiting downstairs for her to finish."

Adapted from Parsha Parables

Riddle of the Week

Which B'rochah can only be recited on a Wednesday?

Last week's riddle:

The number 176 has a certain significance regarding both the Tanach and the Gemoro. What is it?

The longest Sedrah in the Torah – Naso, has 176 p'sukim. Similarly, the longest Perek in Tanach (Tehillim 119) has 176 p'sukim. And finally, the longest Masechta in Shas – Bava Basra, finishes on Daf 176!

Gematria of the Week

Parshas Yisro contains the *Aseres Hadib'ros*. Included in these is the commandment לא תגנוב - Don't steal. This has the same Gematria as גנוב נפש – kidnapping. This hints to the fact that the commandment 'don't steal' in the *Aseres Hadib'ros* is actually referring to kidnapping. Indeed the Gemoro in Sanhedrin (86a) explains that using the principle – 'a matter can be learnt out from its context' (one of R' Yishmael's 13 principles), it becomes evident that this commandment must be referring to kidnapping. The punishment for failure to keep the commandments given just beforehand – 'Don't Kill' and 'Don't commit adultery' is the death penalty. So too the punishment for this commandment must be the death penalty and the only form of stealing which reaches such a serious punishment is kidnapping.

(שמונת כ:ג) - Based on Ba'al Haturim

What Did Yisro Hear?

The Sedrah of Yisro opens with the words 'Vayishma Yisro' – and Yisro heard.... Rashi explains that what Yisro heard and impressed him so much was K'rias Yam Suf, the splitting of the Red Sea, and Milchmes Amalek, how Amalek had attacked the B'nei Yisrael shortly after they had left Mitzrayim.

Rabbi Avraham Twersky shlit'a raises the question: Ok so Yisro was impressed with the splitting of the Yam Suf – this was indeed an awesome miracle the likes of which the world had never seen.

But fighting with Amalek? What was so impressive about this that caused Yisro to decide to join the B'nei Yisrael?

Rav Twersky answers - that Yisro was shocked! He was shocked that Amalek could stoop so low after hearing about the open miracles that Hashem had performed for the B'nei Yisrael, that this nevertheless, did not inhibit them from attacking the B'nei Yisrael.

All other nations were terrified – [Shemos 15: 14-15] – 'Shom'u Amim Yirgozun – Chil Ochaz Yoshvei P'loshes'.... – nations heard and were terrified, trembling overcame the Philistines. Edom and Canaan were equally in dread of the B'nei Yisrael at that time.

So Yisro realised, that in order to maintain Emunah in Hashem – you need a Rav and guidelines to live by – you can't manage on your own!

As it says in Pirkei Avos: Aseih L'cho Rav 'make a Rebbe for yourself', someone who will guide you and advise you how to follow the Derech HaTorah, the true path of life.

Right at the outset of man's creation, Hashem said: 'Lo

Tov Heyos Ho'Odom L'vado' – which normally translates as 'it is not good for a man to be on his own', [which led to the creation of Chava].

Rabbi Avigdor Miller zt'l says that this Posuk can also be translated as: that man on his own will not be good'. If Adam is to reach his potential – he needs a wife – an 'Ezer K'negdo', literally 'a help opposite him', meaning that by working as a partnership, husband and wife can achieve their potential, like two cogs which interact together.

So this is the lesson that Yisro teaches us at the very beginning of the Sedrah in which the Torah is given. You can't manage on your own!

We all need guidance – Yisro left Midyan to join B'nei Yisrael in order to seek guidance from his illustrious son-in-law Moshe Rabbeinu.

If a person thinks he 'can do it on his own' – let him consider how low Amalek sank. They too saw the grandeur of Hashem's miracles, but it failed to make an impact on them to the extent that they have become the very personification of evil in this world.

B'Ezras Hashem, we should merit to walk in the footsteps of Yisro, to consistently seek the advice of others, and this should lead us – like Yisro, to remain on the path of the Torah all the days of our lives.

Written by Rabbi B Katz

M'lachah of the Week

M'labein - Whitening

The sheared wool needed for the draperies in the Mishkon was washed in a river, since, when wool is first shorn it is full of dirt and unwanted matter. There is a dispute as to whether the Av M'lachah of M'labein is simply scouring the material by soaking it in water, or whether the material actually has to be chemically treated (to remove the impurities and whiten the material). As one could imagine, the most common form of M'labein is cleaning, which is prohibited on Shabbos. The M'lachah can be expressed through three categories of activity: Shriyah - soaking, Shifshuf - scrubbing and S'chita - squeezing. Therefore, if one spilled some wine on one's shirt on Shabbos, one would not be allowed to alleviate the stain by soaking it. Furthermore, even if one did not soak it but scrubbed it instead, he would also have transgressed this M'lachah. And finally, even if one did not employ either of the first two processes, simply squeezing the shirt to remove the wine stain would be forbidden.