



# PARSHAS YISRO

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# The Shirah of Yisro

## Introduction

When Yisro heard of the miracles that Hashem performed for the Jewish people, he joined them in the wilderness. There, he observed that Moshe Rabbeinu, his son-in-law, sat alone judging and teaching the people all day. The people had to stand and wait many hours in order to seek out the word of G-d.

Yisro advised Moshe Rabbeinu that he set up a hierarchal system of judges in order to lighten his load and make it easier for the people. With the approval of Hashem, Moshe Rabbeinu set up this system.<sup>1</sup>

Why was the hierarchal system of judges instituted through the advice of Yisro and not commanded directly by Hashem to Moshe?

The Gemara<sup>2</sup> relates that Pharaoh consulted with three advisors to assist him in developing a plan to weaken the Jewish people. These were Bilam, Iyov, and Yisro.

Bilam advised Pharaoh in the enslaving and mistreating of the Jews. As a punishment, he was later killed by the sword in a battle against the Jews. Iyov was silent; he did not agree but did not protest. He was therefore made to endure terrible suffering. Yisro fled to avoid participating and was consequently rewarded that his descendents were part of the Supreme Court that was situated in the Bais HaMikdash.

There are a few difficulties with this Gemara. First of all, what was Yisro's motivation in fleeing? We may assume that he did not have to escape because Pharaoh would kill him for being silent on the subject of the Jewish people because we see that Pharaoh did not kill Iyov for his silence.

During the second Temple era, Agripas, a king of non-Jewish descent, reigned. When he read the Torah publicly and reached the verse "You cannot place upon yourselves a stranger<sup>3</sup>," Agripas cried. The sages calmed him by saying, "You are our brother, you are our brother."<sup>4</sup>

Tosfos notes that, although the sages could not have protested, they should have remained silent. From this Tosfos we deduce that if one cannot protest a wrongdoing, he fulfills his obligation of protesting a transgression by remaining silent.

This makes it difficult to understand why Iyov's silence did not suffice and he was made to suffer for not registering protest.

## Yisro Separated Himself from an Evil Alliance

It is wrong to be part of an association that executes evil. Iyov should have separated himself from Pharaoh's advisory board when it became the tool for torturing the Jewish people.

That is why Yisro was not satisfied with merely remaining silent and fled Egypt. He would not be part of an evil alliance.

He left his prestigious position as renowned diplomat of a world Super Power and became a simple priest whose daughters were subject to harassment. He willingly paid the price of not being part of an evil alliance.

## Yisro's Reward – 'Middah Keneged Middah' (Measure for Measure)

As an appropriate reward for refusing to be part of the advisory board of the Egyptian king, Yisro merited serving as an advisor for Moshe Rabbeinu, the Jewish king. He is the only man that the Torah quotes saying to Moshe Rabbeinu 'I will advise you.'

Yisro refused to be part of a coalition that advised Pharaoh to place upon the Jewish people Egyptian task masters – rulers of a foreign ethnicity. He was therefore rewarded that he merited advising Moshe Rabbeinu that the Jewish people should choose - from their own brethren - worthy men that would lead them.

For declining to participate in implementing plans to make life harsh for the Jewish people, Yisro merited counseling Moshe to implement a system of judges that would make obtaining the law of Hashem easier for them.

Yisro refused to cooperate with Pharaoh's enslavement of the Jewish people for the purpose of building treasuries. His descendents were appointed to be in charge of the treasury in the Bais HaMikdash<sup>5</sup>.

Pharaoh aroused the irrational fear that the Jewish people would join the enemy in the event of war. Yisro refused to buy into it and develop preventative measures. He was rewarded that his children were part of the Supreme Court, whose authority the army required in order to wage war against the harassers of the Jewish people.

Yisro was rewarded 'Middah Keneged Middah' – measure for measure. For every aspect of his self-sacrifice he was received a corresponding reward.

### **Every Creature has its Song**

Every Jew has a unique task and mission on this world according to the essence of his soul just as each angel has its unique mission. An angel sings an exclusive shirah (song) to its Creator when it fulfils its task. A person, too, has a shirah that he sings to Hashem in consonance with the unique essence of his soul and exclusive task.

Furthermore, every creature has a unique reason for existence. It has an angel in heaven corresponding to it that sings its song to the Almighty as it fulfils its task. The fruit bearing tree and the barren tree, wildlife and domestic animals, insects and flying birds; every creation has its specific role in the world and praises its creator through its angel in heaven with a shirah unlike that of any other.

Each person is inspired to sing shirah to Hashem by a different phenomenon, in accordance with his essence. He will be aroused to sing his exclusive song by a stimulus specific to his soul.

### **The Shirah of Yisro**

What plucked the harp strings of Yisro's neshama? What was the stimulus for his shirah?

He was aroused in praise of the Almighty when he noticed how He punishes evildoers in accordance to their misdeeds with astounding accuracy. In the very same manner that the Egyptians abused the Jewish people, they were made to suffer. The Egyptians drowned Jewish babies and were, therefore, drowned themselves; they did not allow them a moments rest to even scratch themselves and were tortured by itchy creatures for a week; etc.

He exclaimed, "Now I know that Hashem is greater than all the Gods, for in the manner that [the Egyptians] plotted against them [they were punished<sup>6</sup>]."

By discerning the precise correlation of the punishment to the crime, Yisro understood that Hashem is not just the Creator from a distance, but is intimately involved in and guides the affairs of this world.

Yisro was aroused to praise Hashem by observing the way He conducts the world 'Middah Keneged Middah.' This was because Yisro was a soul closely attuned to the divine attribute of 'Middah Keneged Middah.' Therefore, he was rewarded in a manner noticeably 'Middah Keneged Middah,' as described above.

In studying the parsha, we first come across Yisro being aroused to praise Hashem upon discerning the exactitude of his repayment of the actions of man. This introduces the chapter of Yisro advising Moshe to institute a judicial system, which he merited 'Middah Keneged Middah,' for his self-sacrifice. This incident was the beginning of a long series of rewards beginning with Yisro himself and continuing on for many generations. This was his reward for separating himself from a coalition that plotted evil against the Jewish people.

### **Finding Our Unique Mission**

Every person was created to fulfill a task and mission that only he can accomplish. He draws near to his creator from a unique perspective.

We have to try to discover what our unique aspect in the service of Hashem is. We are guaranteed that if we honestly seek to find out what our specific mission is, and if we ask Hashem for assistance, then He will guide us in uncovering what our role in Judaism is.

Fortunate is the man who fulfills his task on this world. He will merit singing his unique shirah to his creator all his life.

### **We are Awaiting a Miracle**

The world situation today, with Iran heading nuclear and threatening war, is ominous. Israel, as usual, is its target for destruction and the Jewish people are in grave danger. We need a miracle in order to survive and are guaranteed that Hashem will make one for us.

Achashveirosh was a wicked and anti-Semitic king. At first he reigned over seven nations so the Jewish people were able to escape to the other one hundred and twenty sovereignties of the globe. Then he was king over twenty seven nation, and the Jewish people were squeezed out of those additional twenty countries. When he became king over all the one hundred and twenty countries of the world, the Jewish people had nowhere to flee and therefore, Hashem had to perform a miracle for them.

We are heading toward the great days of Adar and are confident that we will soon sing a song to Hashem in gratitude for his miraculous salvation.

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<sup>1</sup> שמות פרק י"ח

<sup>2</sup> סוטה י"א ע"א

<sup>3</sup> דברים יז:טו

<sup>4</sup> סוטה מא:א

<sup>5</sup> ב:ב ק"י ע"א

<sup>6</sup> יתרו יח:יא ורש"י שם