



דרכים בפרשה

יתרו

ויחד יתרו על כל הטובה אשר עשה ה' לישראל אשר הצילו מיד מצרים

The Yisro rejoiced over all the good that Hashem had done for Klal Yisroel, that He rescued it from the hands of Mitzrayim (18:9)

Yisro's reaction upon hearing a firsthand account from Moshe Rabbeinu of all of the events that the Jewish nation had experienced was one of tremendous joy and emotion. The *meforshim* all seem to agree that ויחד means *and he rejoiced*. However, the unusual word ויחד instead of וישמח lead Chazal to offer many alternative understandings.

The word חד — which can also mean *sharp* — indicates that he took something sharp to give himself a *bris*, which of course is a very happy event. There is another *p'shat* which simply refers to an intense joy mixed together with the pain of Mitzrayim — which, as a convert to Judaism, he would still feel sharply. The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh suggests that the joy was so great that he got goosebumps all over his skin (kind of like the pain that people get in their jaw from smiling too much).

But what was this great joy that he was experiencing? As a father, perhaps he was happy to finally see the full picture of who his daughter married. After all, there was the episode by the inn of Moshe almost dying for not giving a *bris* to his sons. According to the Chasam Sofer, Moshe was not lax in the performance of this *mitzvah* — but rather, he was exempt as he was

en-route to do the commandment of Hashem to save Klal Yisroel. Tzipora did not know this because Moshe never told her. She may have felt that Moshe's priorities were somewhat skewed. So when Aharon suggested that she and the children go back home, she was more than happy, thus leaving her in the dark with big questions about whom she married. One year later, upon hearing about the great events, Yisro was so happy to finally hear the truth. This is why he called in Tzipora and the children at that time. Another *p'shat* might be that Yisro had finally been able to end his lifelong quest in the pursuit of truth as he now found Hashem (Rashi-Mechilta). For either explanation, we can cite the words of Chazal that אין שמחה בהתרת — *there is no joy like the resolution of doubts*.

The Malbim seems to understand that ויחד points to a new understanding for Yisro. He now understood that ה' אחד. It is not that there is good and bad which comes from two distinct places, but rather ה' אחד — it is all one. Everything in the world is from Hashem and even the bad is really good. The Aibishter that seemingly brought something bad upon the Mitzriyim was actually doing something good

for the Yidden. Yisro now saw the entire picture. Accordingly, we can now explain that with his newfound understanding, his rejoicing was now in Hashem Himself. This is apparent in Yisro's words in the beginning of the parshah, where we find that he repeatedly mentions the name of Hashem.

Let us contrast this for a moment with another person who also came to a reckoning of Hashem. In Sefer Yehoshua, we find that Rachav Hazona also came to this understanding, recognizing Hashem's existence, with many similar comments in the *pesukim*. However, Rachav does not express any joy regarding her newfound intimate knowledge of Hashem. Her reaction is one of fear. Her only reaction that she could muster up was, "Will my family be spared?" She was unable to see ה' אחד the way that Yisro saw it; she only saw the bad.

When we recite *krias shema*, we cover our eyes as we express our deepest *emunah* in Hashem. But perhaps as we look at how the world has completely turned upside down, we begin to question things. For that, we close our eyes and look away from the craziness. We declare ה' אחד — it is all one, the good and the bad; it is all Hashem and all for the good.

But here is where the tough questions must be asked: The Gemara (Sanhedrin 94a) tells us in the name of Rav Papayus that these *pesukim* are an embarrassment for Klal Yisroel. Yisro said the words Baruch Hashem — and he was actually the very first person to do so. It is so common

today; everyone says Baruch Hashem regularly, or at least B"H for short. But why was he the first one? Did none of the Yidden that had just experienced *Yetzias Mizrayim*, *Kriyas Yam Suf*, and *Milchemes Amalek* feel any bursts of excitement, joy, or closeness to Hashem? Where were the goosebumps of Klal Yisroel?

But now let us fast forward 3,000 years. We all must ask ourselves the same questions: Do we get excited when we learn our *daf* Gemara, knowing that we are uniting ourselves with Hashem? Are we singing the words of *davening* with utter joy? Do we feel excited about our relationship with Hashem, or is it all lip service with the *mitzvos* being done out of rote? Is it only the *baal teshuva* that gets excited because it is still brand new to him?

The Gerrer Rebbe once met a *bachur* in Yerushalayim and asked him which yeshiva he was learning in. The *bachur* replied, "Ohr Sameach, but don't worry Rebbe — I am not a *baal teshuvah*. The Rebbe famously responded, "*un fahr vos take nisht?*" (And indeed, why not?)

As we once again read the parshah of *Kabbalas Hatorah*, let us accept the Torah with passion, excitement and great rejoicing. Let us happily proclaim Baruch Hashem, Hashem Echad!

מרדכי אפפֿעל, Good Shabbos,



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