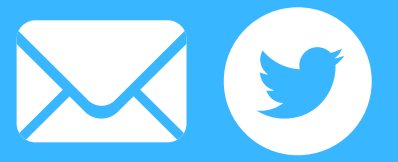




# PARSHA PAGES



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Created by Adele Nemirov

## יתרו - YISRO

### WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS WEEK'S PARSHA?

After hearing about the events of the Jews leaving Egypt, **Yisro**, Moshe's father-in-law, along with **Tzipora**, Moshe's wife, and his two sons, **Gershom** and **Eliezer**, come to join the Jewish people at their camp next to **Mount Sinai**. Moshe greets them and tells Yisro the detailed story of the Jews leaving Egypt. Yisro blesses Hashem and brings a sacrifice, and **Aharon** and the **70 elders** of the Jewish people join Moshe and his family for a feast. The next day, Yisro sees Moshe working as a judge for the people, settling legal disputes. With the number of people approaching Moshe every day, Yisro suggests a new system: Moshe will pick **judges** who will serve underneath him, creating a system of courts. Moshe listens to this suggestion and sometime after this discussion, Yisro returns to his native land. In the **third month** after the Jews left Egypt, **Sivan**, Hashem tells Moshe to teach the Jews that if they follow Hashem's commands, they will be a **kingdom of priests** and a **holy nation**, and the Jews accept this teaching. Next, Hashem tells Moshe that He will speak to him out of a cloud on **Har Sinai** before the Jews, and the Jews should prepare for **three days** by purifying themselves. Hashem forbids the people from approaching Har Sinai until they hear a **shofar** sound. On the **third day**, Moshe tells the Jews to come to Har Sinai. The mountain is covered in smoke and begins to shake. A **shofar** blast sounds and Moshe and Hashem speak to each other in front of the Jews. Hashem tells Moshe to forbid the people from looking at Him and tells Moshe to bring Aharon onto the mountain with him. Then, Hashem gives the Jewish people **the Ten Commandments**. After the people hear Hashem speak, they ask Moshe to speak to them instead because they feared dying from hearing Hashem directly. Hashem then forbids the Jewish people from creating idols or building a stone altar, for only earthen altars are permitted.

#### THINK ABOUT IT:

*The Gemara Shabbos 88b teaches that when the Jews gathered at the foot of Har Sinai, Hashem held the mountain over them like a barrel and said: If you accept the Torah, good! And if not, there will be your burial.*



*There are many explanations of this idea. How would you explain it? Although it sounds like a threat, how could it be something positive?*

### THE MAN OF MANY NAMES

**וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוֹ כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן חַתָּן מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֱ-לֹהִים לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ כִּי הוֹצִיא ה' אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם: (שמות יח:א)**  
Now Moshe's father in law, **Yisro**, the chieftain of Midyan, heard all that G-d had done for Moses and for Israel, His people; that G-d had taken Israel out of Egypt.

The **Torah** first introduces us to **Yisro** when Moshe runs away from Egypt to **Midyan**. **Yisro** is called the **Priest of Midyan**, and Moshe marries his daughter, **Tzipora**. However, the first time that **Yisro** speaks (2:18), he is called by a different name: **Reuel**. **Rashi** (1040-1105, France) on this week's Parsha teaches that **Yisro** actually had **7 names**: **Reuel, Yeser, Yisro, Chovav, Chever, Keni, and Putiel**. He connects each of these names to events in Yisro's life, focusing on the fact that Yisro **converted** to Judaism. **Rashi**, based on a

**Midrash**, teaches that **Yisro** tried all of the **Avodah Zara**, false worships, in the world before accepting Judaism. **Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz** (1902-1979, Poland, Shanghai & Israel) explains that **Yisro** was a **truth-seeker**, and arrived at the truth by trying everything before choosing what was the real truth. This paradigm, however, is not the ultimate ideal path.

*Yisro is one of the few people who introduced a new system into Torah law. However, this system comes immediately before **Matan Torah**, the moment when Hashem revealed Himself to the Jewish People.*



#### DISCUSS:

*Direct revelation of G-d is the clearest way to know that He exists. Yisro symbolizes another way. Which way is better? Why?*



# 10

### THE BIG TEN

At the moment that Hashem revealed Himself to the Jewish people, He gave them the **Ten Commandments**, or, in Hebrew, the **Ten Statements**. You might be wondering, **why ten?** Why not one commandment to believe in Hashem? And **why were these commandments given first?**

The **Midrash** teaches us that the Jews were actually taught the entire Torah at **Har Sinai**, and that the **Ten Commandments** are general principles that include the other 603 commandments. Additionally, there are **620 letters** in the **Ten Commandments**, symbolizing the **613 Torah commandments** and the **7 Noahide Laws**. However, the number **10** is also essential! The **Zohar**, the earliest work of Jewish mysticism, explains that the **Ten Commandments** are the fulfillment of the **Ten Utterances** with which Hashem created the world. The **Gemara (Shabbos 88a)** explains that, if the Jews hadn't accepted the Torah, the world would have reverted to chaos, as it was at the beginning of creation.



image from Chabad.org

*Why would the **Zohar** connect the Jews accepting the Torah with the creation of the world?*

