

Parshas Yisro

This week's Parsha, Yisro, contains the giving of the Torah. I was in shul, and I overheard someone ask a question to their friend regarding Yisro's expression "Baruch Hashem" in 18:10, that it was a non-Jew who recognized the greatness of Hashem, and the salvation of the Jews was from Hashem's hand. Following along the theme of last week's essay, our work is to recognize the divine providence in everything. Whereas it is easy to give a human recognition and or credit, which on some level is complimentary, and part of human interaction, but it cannot be the final understanding of an event. It must be understood in our minds that everything comes from Hashem, and we know it by learning and practicing the Torah and Mitzvos, and contemplating the greatness of Hashem. The Baal Shem Tov's novel revelation to the masses was this point of divine providence in all our actions and service. Furthermore, in Shaar Habitachon, Rabbeinu Bachya Ibn Paquda explains that recognizing that all is from Hashem and not placing full faith and reliance on humans will be a freeing experience. Yisro, who, although he already seemed to believe in Hashem (based on the language he used, see Rashi there), was only furthering his divine belief by exclaiming praise of Hashem, based on the evidence of the salvation of the Jews. A Jew's direct connection with Hashem is that he believes in and is connected to Hashem, even if the revelation isn't obvious to him; rather, it requires the work we can do with the Torah. Yisro required a revelation to achieve this level, and he is praised for it; nevertheless, we can learn from it. Although we inherently believe in Hashem

and are connected to Him, there is a point to look at revelation in the real world to exclaim Baruch Hashem. Furthermore, with the giving of the Torah, Yisro's reaction will be similar for the rest of the world. What this means is that to us, the Jews who have the connection to Hashem that predates even the world, and is for us because we are the progeny of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yakov, in order to take the Torah, and bind the physical with the spiritual and vice versa, and uplift the entire physical dimension to be an abode for Hashem. This requires work, learning and practicing the Torah, and exclaiming Baruch Hashem about all facets of existence. What happens next in the process is we trudge through Golus to welcome the ultimate revelation where Hashem Echad Ushemo Echad, the levels required to reveal the holy name of Hashem in this world that will be obvious to everyone, and they too will exclaim Baruch Hashem. Finally, there is something we can learn from people who come from outside. Yisro's management analysis of Moshe's leadership style led to an accepted proposal to restructure the Jewish judicial system. His advice was so profound that not only was it accepted, but the Parsha was also named after him. That connects then with the above-noted point, that when something from the physical world is used by a Jew in a Jewish way, and for the service of Hashem, it is uplifted, and can attain higher spiritual attainment, in a way that furthers making the abode for Hashem in the physical dimension. We are allowed to learn from outside, so long as it is used to achieve closeness, in a real way, to Hashem and deepens our connection to Hashem. It is for the same reason as making a Bracha on food, which is physical, but by blessing

it, we have uplifted it to its spiritual potential.

Someone in our weekly Parsha Shiur asked why the mountain was held over the heads of the Jews; wouldn't that be coercion? Why then are the Jews rewarded for saying Na'aseh V'Nishma? An answer can be that the mountain, although physically held over their heads, means that if the outcome of the Jews accepting the Torah, it would be a reversal of the way the world needs to be. That is, Hashem, who created the world in the way that He did, requires the Torah to be in it, and not accepting the Torah would be an overturning of nature like a mountain suspended over their heads.

In conclusion, the Torah is the guidebook, Hashem is our King, and our redemption is on the way. We must do our part and our work to ensure that this light of Torah and Hashem proliferates, and let's all exclaim Baruch Hashem.

Good Shabbos