

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Yisro

For the week ending 20 Shevat 5759
5 & 6 February 1999

Parsha Questions

1. Yisro had 7 names. Why was one of his names *Yeser*?
2. News of which two events motivated Yisro to come join the Jewish People?
3. What name of Yisro indicates his love for Torah?
4. Why was Tzipora with her father, Yisro, and not with Moshe when the *Bnei Yisrael* left Egypt?
5. Why does verse 18:5 say that Yisro came to the desert — don't we already know that the *Bnei Yisrael* were in the desert?
6. Why did Moshe tell Yisro all that Hashem had done for the Jewish People?
7. According to the *Midrash* quoted by Rashi, how did Yisro respond when he was told about the destruction of Egypt?
8. Who is considered as if he enjoys the splendor of the *Shechina*?
9. On what day did Moshe sit to judge the Jewish People?
10. Who is considered a co-partner in Creation?
11. "Moshe sat to judge the people, and the people stood before Moshe...." What bothered Yisro about this arrangement?
12. Why did Yisro return to his own land?
13. How did the encampment at Sinai differ from the other encampments?
14. To whom does the Torah refer when it uses the term "*Beis Yaakov*"?
15. How is Hashem's protection of the Jewish People similar to an eagle's protection of its young?
16. What was Hashem's original plan for *Matan Torah*? What was the response of the Jewish People?
17. How many times greater is the "measure of reward" than the "measure of punishment"?
18. How is it derived that "Don't steal" refers to kidnapping?
19. In response to hearing the Torah given at Sinai, how far backwards did the Jewish people retreat in fear?
20. Why does the use of iron tools profane the altar?

Sherlox and the Mysterious Death

Watstein peered into the text and said, "G-d warns that if the Jews approach Mount Sinai that '*many of them would fall dead.*' (*Shmos 19:21*) Rashi comments that even if one of them were to die, G-d considers it as if many died."

"Numbers seem to lose meaning when lives are lost," said world famous *detextive* Sherlox Holmes.

"True. But still, many deaths are surely worse than one death. The verse warns that *many* will die if the nation trespasses upon the mountain. Why can't Rashi leave the verse as is, a warning stated in the strongest terms?"

Answer

"Look at the word 'fall' in the verse," said Sherlox.

"Hmm ... it's the singular, *nafal*," said Watstein.

"You would have expected the plural form, *naflu*, wouldn't you?"

"Yes. In Hebrew, plural nouns have plural verbs," said Watstein. "In order to agree with the word '*many*' in the phrase '*many of them would fall dead,*' you would have expected the plural form, *naflu*. Rashi addresses this anomaly with the explanation that when it comes to loss of life, one Jew is considered as many."

(Based on *Sifsei Chachamim*; *Sherlox* is by Reuven Subar, inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek's "What's Bothering Rashi")

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Parshas Yisro — 20 Shevat 5759, 5 & 6 February 1999

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I Did Not Know That!

“Zachor es Yom HaShabbos L’kadsho — Remember the Shabbos day to sanctify it.”

This verse, which commands us to honor the 7th day, is the 7th verse of the Ten Commandments. It begins with the letter *zayin*, the 7th letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In the following verses, 7 entities are commanded to rest: “You, your son, your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, your animal, and the sojourner within your city gates.” Corresponding to these 7 are the 7 expressions of *menucha*, tranquillity, in the “*atah echad*” paragraph of the Shabbos afternoon prayer.

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

18:6,10	Yisro’s Communication and Conversion
18:11	Why Egyptians were Punished
18:15	The Role of Moshe
18:22	Availability of Justice
20:2	Belief Based on Experience
20:6	The Beloved of Hashem
20:8	Remembering Shabbos
20:17	The “Test” of <i>Matan Torah</i>
19:3, 8;9, 20:15, 24:1	The Chronology of <i>Matan Torah</i>

Sefer Hachinuch

25	Faith
30	Respect for Divine Name
31	<i>Kiddush</i> on Wine
32	Shabbos Rest
33	Gratitude to Parents
35	Promiscuity

Malbim

20:2	The Essence of Belief in Hashem
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Ibn Ezra

20:14	Discipline of Desire
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Answers to this Week’s Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary, unless otherwise stated

- 18:1 - Because he caused a Parsha to be added to the Torah. *Yeser* means addition.
- 18:1 - The splitting of the sea and the war against Amalek.
- 18:1 - Chovav.
- 18:3 - When Aharon met Moshe with his family on their way down to Egypt, Aharon said to Moshe: “We’re pained over the Jews already in Egypt, and you’re bringing more Jews to Egypt?” Moshe, hearing this, sent his wife and children back to Midian.
- 18:5 - To show Yisro’s greatness. He was living in a luxurious place, yet he went to the desert in order to study the Torah.
- 18:8 - To draw Yisro closer to the Torah way of life.
- 18:9 - He grieved.
- 18:12 - One who dines with Torah scholars.
- 18:13 - The day after *Yom Kippur*.
- 18:13 - A judge who renders a correct decision.
- 18:14 - Yisro felt that the people weren’t being treated with the proper respect.
- 18:27 - To convert the members of his family to Judaism.
- 19:2 - The Jewish People were united.
- 19:3 - The Jewish women.
- 19:4 - An eagle carries its young on top of its wings to protect them from human arrows. So too, Hashem’s cloud of glory separated between the Egyptians and the Jewish camp in order to absorb Egyptian missiles and arrows fired at the Jewish People.
- 19:9 - Hashem offered to appear to Moshe and to give the Torah through him. The Jewish People responded that they wished to hear the Torah directly from Hashem.
- 20:6 - Five hundred times.
- 20:13 - Because it is written immediately after “Don’t murder” and “Don’t commit adultery,” it is derived that “Don’t steal” refers to a crime carrying the same penalty as the first two, namely, the death penalty.
- 20:15 - They backed away from the mountain twelve *mil* (one *mil* is 2000 cubits).
- 20:22 - The altar was created to extend life; iron is sometimes used to make weapons which shorten life.