

Bringing meaning to life

Parasha with Rabbi Benji Levy

DEVARIM

VAETCHANAN

EKEV

RE'EH

SHOFTIM

KI TEITZEI

KI TAVO

NITZAVIM

VAYELECH

HAAZINU

V'ZOT
HABRACHA

DEVARIM

YITRO THE ANONYMOUS
MESSENGER

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In the final five weeks of his life, **Moses attempts to remind his beloved people of the Torah's teachings, and counsel and inspire them towards a successful future.** While essentially reviewing the Torah,¹ Moses chooses to omit certain incidents and highlight others in his recounting of the events. Reading between the lines of his review can therefore sometimes be as enlightening and valuable as the lines themselves.

Moses begins by reminiscing over his inability to carry the burden of leadership alone and lays out the innovative idea of delegating responsibility to other worthy individuals.² This strategic approach was actually first floated by Moses' father-in-law, Yitro, who saw the burden under which Moses was operating,³ however, in his review of events, Moses fails to mention his father-in-law.

On a basic personal level, Yitro is Moses' family and therefore one would assume that the right thing to do would be to mention the fact that this plan was originally his initiative. On a broader level, since one of the Torah portions is named after Yitro and grants significance to his presence in the chronicle of the Jewish people, one would assume that Moses would have at least mentioned his name here and given him credit for the idea. Furthermore, the Talmud states: 'whoever says something in someone else's name brings redemption to the world.'⁴ It is clear that **the Talmud lends great importance to giving credit to the originator of ideas.** In that case, why was Moses not sensitive to this value?

One may suggest that Moses simply forgot to mention his name, but a deep appreciation of who Moses was precludes entertaining such a notion.

Through his omission, Moses is implicitly showing that the idea of delegation is not actually a revolutionary idea at all. By not making a big deal of the original suggestion from Yitro, and by not emphasising the radical nature of such a strategy, Moses is showing that the idea of delegation is more evolutionary than revolutionary. Moses should not have needed Yitro to suggest it. It is the kind of idea that he was capable of coming up with himself.

We all are familiar with ideas, strategies and plans that we simply should not need someone else to notice on our behalf, and yet for one reason or another we are unable to tap into our inner resources and think of them for ourselves. Of course, having a sounding board is useful; often it helps to have someone hold up a metaphorical mirror for us to look into, and sometimes it is simply easier to hear other



people's suggestions than to think of our own. However, this does not mean that the ideas that others suggest are so revolutionary that we could not have thought of them ourselves. This is most notable when our friends, family or colleagues turn to us for advice. More often than not, the advice we offer is strikingly similar to advice they may have given us in the past. **If we genuinely dig deep within ourselves, we are likely to find that the solutions are all there, just waiting to be revealed.**

Yitro represents one who notices the words that are not said. He hears beyond the sound and sees beyond the sight. We too must learn to listen to our intuitions, to tune into our enormous potential and to follow our instincts.

Moses does not mention Yitro's name when talking of his system of delegation, for the idea was one he should have thought of alone. If we are able to tune out the general noise of life and tune into our own individual strengths, insights and wisdom, then we will be better able to acutely analyse our decisions, effectively assess our actions and problem-solve successfully and independently.

Notes

¹ Many infer this perspective of the book of Deuteronomy from its other title, Mishneh Torah - mentioned in Deuteronomy 17:18

which literally translates as the repetition of Torah.

² Deuteronomy 1:9-13.

³ Exodus 18:17-18.

⁴ Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Chullin* 104b.

Parasha Fact:

Although it seemed unclear who wanted the spies to scout out Israel, Moses clarifies that it was at the people's request that the spies were sent.

Next week in Vaetchanan :

When we truly love someone, we find ourselves willing to do almost anything. We help them with enthusiasm and we are always ready to go that extra step. What if, however, as our very act of service towards them, we are required to curb our enthusiasm and refrain from going that extra step? Twice daily we recall the command to love God with all our heart, our soul and our might, which is why, when Moses relays the prohibition against adding anything to the Torah's laws, it leaves us particularly perplexed.

שבת שלום