

Table Talk Parshat Yitro

Grades 4-8

שמות י"ח:כ"ד-כ"ז

וַיֵּרָא חֲתָן מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-הוּא עֹשֶׂה לָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר מֶה-
הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה לָעָם מֵדוּעַ אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב לְבַדָּךְ
וְכָל-הָעָם נֹכָח עֲלֶיךָ מִן-בֹּקֶר עַד-עָרֶב: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לַחֲתָנוֹ
כִּי-יָבֹא אֵלַי הָעָם לִדְרֹשׁ אֲלַיָּם: כִּי-יִהְיֶה לָהֶם דָּבָר בָּא
אֵלַי וְאֶפְסָתִי בֵּין אִישׁ וּבֵין רֵעֵהוּ וְהוֹדַעְתִּי אֶת-תֹּכְחִי
הָאֱלֹקִים וְאֶת-תּוֹרָתִי: וַיֹּאמֶר חֲתָן מֹשֶׁה אֵלָיו לֹא-טוֹב
הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה: נָכַל תִּפְּלֹ גַם-אַתָּה גַם-הָעָם הַזֶּה
אֲשֶׁר עִמָּךְ כִּי-יִכָּבֵד מִמֶּךָ הַדָּבָר לֹא-תוּכַל עֲשֹׂהוּ לְבַדָּךְ:

Exodus 18:14-24

But when Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" Moses replied to his father-in-law, "It is because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes before me, and I decide between one person and another, and I make known the laws and teachings of God." But Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing you are doing is not right; you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.

ספורנו על שמות י"ח:כ"ב:ב'

ונשאו אתך כמה שתצטרך להיות אתה בעצמך
הם יעזרוך, כענין ללמד דעת את העם אחר
ששמעו מפיו, כמו שהזכירו כסדר משנה:

Sforno on Exodus 18:22:2

אתך, ונשאו אתך, they will give you the chance to give your full attention to those problems that are complicated by sharing the burden of leadership with you. They will also dispense knowledge to the people.

רשב"ם על שמות י"ח:כ"ג:ג'

וגם כל העם הזה - הנצב עליך מן הבקר ועד
הערב יבא מהרה איש איש אל ביתו בשלום.

Rashbam on Exodus 18:23:3

וגם כל העם הזה, the ones standing in line before you from morning to evening, יבא בשלום, will each be able to go home in short order.

"Moses preferred strict justice to peace. He was not a man to compromise or mediate. In addition, as the greatest of the prophets, he knew almost instantly which of the parties before him was innocent and which guilty; who had right on his side and who did not. It was therefore impossible for him to mediate, since this is only permitted before the judge has reached a verdict, which in Moses' case was almost immediately. Hence the Netziv's astonishing conclusion. By delegating the judicial function downward, Moses would bring ordinary people – with no special prophetic or legal gifts – into the seats of judgment. Precisely because they lacked Moses' intuitive knowledge of law and justice, they were able to propose equitable solutions, and an equitable solution is one in which both sides feel they have been heard; both gain; both believe the result is fair. That, as the Talmud says, is the only kind of justice that at the same time creates peace. That is why the delegation of judgment would not only help Moses avoid total exhaustion; it would also help "all these people" to "reach their place in peace."

-The Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

- The Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution

Let's Talk!

What was not working with Moshe's system of judgement?

What suggestions did Yitro make to change things?

Why is it important for leaders to share responsibility with a leadership team?

It is understood from the sixth amendment that someone on trial will be judged by a jury of his/her peers; why is this a right? Does this make justice more or less fair? More or less just?

Kids...ask your parents!

What do you think about being judged by a jury of peers?

Was there a court case that you can remember that did not appear to end fairly?



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