

Setting Torah Free: the Holy Act of Delegation

Parshat Yitro

Moshe is overwhelmed:

Exodus 18:14-16

Moses' father-in-law saw how much he had to do for the people, and he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for 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...I decide between one person and another, and **I make known the laws and teachings of God.**"

Yitro's response:

Exodus 18:18, 18:23

You will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.

[gives Moshe instructions for delegating to many judges]

If you do this—and God so commands you (or “when God commands you further”) —**you will be able to stand; all these people too will go home unwearyed.** (or, “this people will come to its place in peace”

What was standing in Moshe's way?

Chizkuni on Exodus 18:16:

“God’s statutes and God’s teachings.” Moses refers to the statutes and teachings that G-d had already taught him prior to the revelation at Mount Sinai (see Exodus 15:25)

Or HaChaim on Exodus 18:23:

“if you do this thing and the Lord will command you, etc.” ...Perhaps Yitro was afraid of Moses arguing that after all was said and done he would forfeit the opportunity to perform the commandments (including teaching the people God's ways) and that it was not the way of the righteous to look for ways to ease their burdens even if they would tire from shouldering them.

Bamidbar Rabbah 13:15

“there are seventy faces to the Torah.” *Bamidbar Rabbah 13:15*

شمונות י"ח:י"ז

וירא חתן משה את כל-אשר-הוא עשה עם זעם והוא אמר מה-הדבר הזה אשר אתה עשה לעם מד' וע' אתה ישבל בך וכל-העם נצבר עלייך מז-בקר עד-ערכב:

ויאמר משה לחתנו כי-יאלי העם לדרש אלקים...ושפטת בין איש ובין רעהו והודיעתי את-חקי האלקים ואת-תורתינו:

شمונות י"ח:י"ח

אבל תבל גם-אתה גם-העם הזה אשר עמך כי-כבד מפרק הדבר לא-תוכל עשו לבדך:

אם את-הדבר הזה תעשה ואזך אלקים ויכלת עמד וגם כל-העם הזה על-מיקומו יבא בשלום:

חזקוני, שמות י"ח:ט"ז:א'

את-חקי האלקים ואת-תורתינו: שנtan לנו כבר כדכתייב שם “שם לו חוק ומשפט”.

חזקוני, שמות י"ח:ט"ז:א'

... ואולי שנתכוון לומר לו תשובה על מה שיטען כי סוף כל סוף הוא מונע מעצמו המצוות ואין מדת הצדיקים להקל מעלהם המצוות הגם כי ייעף