

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.**"

שמות י"ח:י"ד

וַיֵּרָא חִתָּן מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-הוּא עֹשֶׂה לְעַם וַיֹּאמֶר
מִה־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה לְעַם מִדֹּי וַעַי אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב לְבַדְּךָ
וְכָל-הָעָם נֹצֵב עָלֶיךָ מִן-בֹּקֶר עַד-עֶרֶב:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְחִתְּנוֹ כִּי-יָבֵא אֵלַי הָעָם לְדַרְשׁ אֱלֹקִים: ...וְשִׁפְטֵתִי
בֵּין אִישׁ וּבֵין רֵעֵהוּ וְהוֹדַעְתִּי אֶת-חֻקֵי הָאֱלֹקִים וְאֶת-תּוֹרֹתָיו:

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 unwearied.** (or, "this people will come to its place in peace")

שמות י"ח:י"ח

נָכַל תִּבָּל גַּם-אַתָּה גַּם-הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עִמָּךְ כִּי-כָבֵד
מִמֶּךָ הַדְּבָר לֹא-תִוְכַל עֲשֹׂהוּ לְבַדְּךָ:

אִם אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה תַעֲשֶׂה וְצִוְּךָ אֱלֹקִים וְיָכַלְתָּ עִמָּד וְגַם
כָּל-הָעָם הַזֶּה עַל-מְקוֹמוֹ יָבֹא בְשָׁלוֹם:

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)

חזקוני, שמות י"ח:ט"ז:א'

את חקי האלקים ואת תורתיו: שנתן לנו כבר כדכתיב
שם "שם לו חק ומשפט".

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.

חזקוני, שמות י"ח:ט"ז:א'

... ואולי שנתכוון לומר לו תשובה על מה שיטעון כי סוף
כל סוף הוא מונע מעצמו המצות ואין ממדת הצדיקים
להקל מעליהם המצות הגם כי ייעף

Bamidbar Rabbah 13:15

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