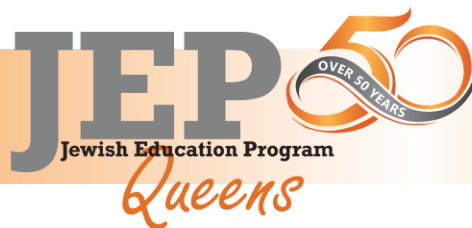


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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

HASHEM PLEASE WAIT! LET ME FIRST CHECK IT OUT

PARSHAS SHMOS

Hashem instructed Moshe to go to Egypt to rescue the Jewish People from bondage and take them out of Egypt. The next pasuk says that Moshe went to Yisro. Why didn't Moshe go directly to Egypt, as Hashem had instructed?

Rashi (4:18), quoting the **Talmud** (Nedarim 65a) explains that Moshe had to first go to Yisro to get his permission to go to Egypt since he had sworn to Yisro that he would not leave Midian without permission.

Midrash Tanchuma (16:5) and **Midrash Rabba** (4:2) give a different answer. Moshe told Hashem that it would not have been proper for him to leave Midian without Yisro's permission since Yisro had welcomed him into his home and had treated him with kindness. The **Eitz Yosef** (Shemos Rabbah 4:2:1) adds that Yisro had showed Moshe much love and honor. In fact, Moshe felt he had to show this respect to Yisro even if that would result in a severe punishment from Hashem for not going on his mission immediately (**Eitz Yosef** 4:2:8)

The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l (Biurei Chofetz Chaim on the Torah compiled by Yisroel Yosef Braunstein) says that Moshe's reaction is mindboggling and incomprehensible! How could Moshe ignore Hashem by not leaving for Egypt immediately?! Furthermore, it appears that if Yisro had not permitted Moshe to go, then Moshe would have stayed in Midian. How could that be? Moshe was being sent on a mission to benefit the ENTIRE Jewish nation, to redeem them from slavery! Furthermore, the existence of the entire world depended on Moshe's mission!! How so? After leaving Egypt, the Jewish People were going to receive the Torah. Hashem had made Creation conditional. If the Jewish People would accept the Torah, then the world would continue to exist. If not, the world would revert to nothingness. This was all dependent on

"Moshe went and returned to Yisro, his father-in-law, and said to him, 'I would like to leave and return to my brothers in Egypt, to see if they are still alive.' Yisro said to Moshe, 'Go in peace.'"

Moshe accomplishing his mission of taking the Jews out of Egypt.

Furthermore, Moshe had also been good to Yisro by rescuing his daughters from the shepherds at the well. According to the **Alshich** (Shmos 2-21), Moshe had just been looking for a place to stay and had

not been looking for a wife. By agreeing to marry Yisro's daughter, Tziporah, Moshe had done another favor for Yisro. The **Sforno** says that Moshe "paid" for his lodging by shepherding Yisro's sheep.

Although Moshe may have given more than he had received, since he benefitted from Yisro, Moshe owed him a debt of gratitude. This is what **Avos dRav Nosson** (41) quotes in the name of Rabbi Yehudah ben Teima. "If your friend has done you just a little bit of good, think of it as a lot."

We see how far we must go to show gratitude for what our friend did for us!

Rabbi Isaac Sher (quoted in Talelei Oros by Rabbi Yissachar Dov Rubin) asks how Moshe knew that the obligation of gratitude extends this far? He answered that he had learned it directly from Hashem. Hashem had told him to ask Pharaoh for permission for the Jews to leave. Why was it necessary to get his permission? The answer is that it was out of a sense of gratitude for what had occurred 210 years earlier!

Pharoah had graciously welcomed Yaakov and his family to Egypt to escape the severe famine. He had said to Yosef, *"Take your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you shall live off the fat of the land."* (Bereishis 45:18) As a result of Pharaoh's generosity, the Jewish People became beholden to Egypt, making

it impossible for them to leave without permission. They could not leave their bondage because of their obligation to show gratitude.

Rav Noson Tzvi Finkel zt"l says (quoted in Iturei Torah by Aharon Yaakov Greenberg) – that if Moshe did not have this attribute of *"hakaras hatov"*, showing appreciation, then he would not have been fit to be the leader.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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