

YISRO'S IMPRESSED

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 316, The Reading of the Ten Commandments
Good Shabbos!*

Dedicated This Year Le'eluy Nishmas Chaya Bracha Bas R. Yissocher Dov - In memory of Mrs. Adele Frand

Yisro Was Impressed By G-d's Harsh Treatment of Moshe

"Yisro... heard all that G-d did for Moshe and for the Jewish people." As a result, Yisro was very impressed and became a Ger Tzedek [Righteous Convert]. Rashi (1040-1105) takes note of the fact that the pasuk [verse] distinguishes between what happened to Moshe and what happened to the Jewish people, and explains that this teaches us that "Moshe was equal to all of Israel put together."

The Baal HaTurim (1275-1340) is also bothered by the separate expressions. However, the Baal HaTurim is particularly troubled by the fact that the pasuk says that Yisro heard what "ELOKIM did for Moshe". The Divine Name of Elokim usually refers to Judgment or punishment. The Baal HaTurim says that Yisro was in fact impressed by the punishment that Moshe almost received (death) for delaying the circumcision of his son. This phenomenon was part of what made such a major impression on Yisro that it ultimately led to his decision to convert.

Rav Nissan Alpert (died c. 1987) explains why Yisro was impressed with Moshe's harsh treatment at the Hand of G-d. Why was Moshe Rabbeinu treated so severely? The answer is that he was different from every other person. We see, therefore, that G-d "customizes" the way He treats people. G-d does not treat everyone the same. More is expected of a person of higher stature than of a person of lower stature. The average person would not be punished with death for delaying the circumcision

of their child while traveling in the wilderness. But Moshe was treated differently.

That individuality made a profound impression on Yisro. If Moshe is dealt with differently, then we see that our relationship with G-d is not static. Hopefully, as we grow older, we grow wiser and become better people. We become more experienced; we've seen more of life. One cannot remain on the same spiritual level for ten, twenty, or thirty years. This impressed Yisro.

"I am not the same person anymore. I cannot be content to merely be the same person who I used to be. After having seen the Splitting of the Reed Sea and after having seen the War with Amalek, I cannot remain static. I have to grow. I have to become better."

To Yisro, that meant that he had to convert. Now, as a different person, he knew he had a different relationship with G-d. He could no longer be the Priest to Idolatry. He had seen too much. He had learned too much from his observations. That is why "that which Elokim did to Moshe" had such a profound effect on Yisro.

This is an important lesson. The 30-year-old person is not the same person that he was at 20. The 50-year-old person is not the same as he was at 30. There must be growth. There is not a universal standard with which G-d relates to man. The relationship is constantly changing based on changing expectations, ones that are based on constant change in man himself.

The Climax Of The "Ten Commandments" - Anti-climactic?

The "Ten Commandments" ends with "Thou shall not covet your neighbor's household..." One should not be envious of his friend's wealth, his friend's wife, or his friend's possessions.

The "Ten Commandments" represent the fundamentals of Judaism. We could certainly agree that the other nine commandments should be counted in a list of the fundamentals of our religion. Each of the nine, it could easily be argued, is fundamental to religion and fundamental to society. However, not coveting seems to be of a somewhat "lower stature" than the other nine.

We can understand "Do not commit adultery." But is merely being jealous of someone else's wife on par with adultery? What is so fundamental about not coveting that it makes the "Top Ten?"

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) says that "Thou shall not covet" is one of the most fundamental commandments in the Torah. A person cannot be an "observant" Jew without this mitzvah. This is because the essence of the Commandment of "Lo Sachmod" (Thou shall not covet) is the concept of personalized Divine Providence (Hashgocha Pratis).

Not only is there a G-d who Created the world, who took us out of Egypt, and who is interested in global affairs, but there is a G-d who is interested every one of our lives. He is concerned with how much money we earn and where we live and what we do. He is intimately involved with each of our lives. This is known as Hashgocha Pratis.

That is why we should not covet our neighbor's wife. If we believe in Hasghocha Pratis then we

believe that the wife that G-d gave us is the wife that he wanted us to have. For better or for worse - - she is the one.

Likewise, we have the job that He wants us to have, we drive the car that He wants us to drive, and we earn the money that He wants us to earn -- because He decided that these things are good for us. When we start acting jealous and thinking, "if only I had his wife, or his job or his money..." we are in effect denying that it is G-d who gave us this wife and this job and this salary.

Lo Sachmod is the affirmation that all that I possess in this world is custom-designed and special delivered to me from G-d. That is why this commandment belongs in the "Ten Commandments". If we believe, as some do, that G-d only worries about "the big picture" -- war or no war -- but not about how much I should earn this year, this indicates a major lack in our state of belief. One who appropriately believes in personalized Divine Providence, will not desire someone else's wife or job or car.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Yisro are provided below:

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