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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת יתרו

וַיֵּרָא חִתֵּן מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹשֶׂה לְעַם וַיֹּאמֶר מֶה הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עֹשֶׂה לְעַם וכו'. וְאַתָּה תִּחְזָה מִכָּל הָעָם אֲנָשֵׁי חַיִּל וכו'. (שמות יח - יד, כא)

The father-in-law of Moshe saw all that he was doing to the people, and he said, "What is this thing that you do to the people..." And you shall discern from among the entire people, men of accomplishment ... (Shemos 18:14,21)

In this week's *Sidrah*, we learn of Yisro joining Klal Yisroel in the Midbar. The day after his arrival, he observed a situation that left him perturbed. Moshe sat from morning until evening, judging the people. Yisro then suggested that Moshe delegate authority to others to ensure that he could focus only on matters that required his personal involvement. Hashem approved of Yisro's advice, and Moshe chose leaders to assist him in guiding the nation.

Rashi (18:1) cites Chazal who mention that Yisro had seven names. The first name is יֵתָר, which means "extra." He received this name because his advice resulted in the additional *parshah* of "וְאַתָּה תִּחְזָה" being written in the Torah. His second name is יֵתָרוֹ; after he converted to Yiddishkeit and began observing the *mitzvos*, the letter "ו" was added to his original name יֵתָר.

R' Leib *zatzal* raised an interesting question: How is it that Yisro received an entirely new name for his role in expanding the Torah, while his conversion and subsequent fulfilment of *mitzvos*, which were undoubtedly significant acts, resulted in just the addition of a single letter?

R' Leib demonstrates from here that increasing one's understanding of Torah is not only equivalent to but superior to the performance of all *mitzvos*! He explains this with the *possuk* (*Mishlei* 6:23): כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אֹר, *for a mitzvah is a lamp, and the Torah is light*. While *mitzvos* serve as a lamp, the Torah, as the light, is immeasurably greater. When a person develops new insights in Torah, they themselves become the light of Torah – a transformed individual. Thus, when Yisro converted and began to perform *mitzvos*, he remained the same individual and had not yet achieved a new identity. However, when he caused a new *parshah* to be added to the Torah, he was blessed with the אֹר הַתּוֹרָה. This act of formulating a plan to change the transmission of Torah reflected Yisro's profound understanding of Torah law and ideals. As a result of attaining this new identity, he was rewarded with a new name.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* further observes that Yisro (according to Ramban and others) joined the Jewish nation after Matan Torah. Therefore, he must have converted immediately upon his arrival, accepting the performance of *mitzvos*. However, the addition of the "ו" in recognition of this undertaking was only granted later on as an addendum to the name יֵתָרוֹ, which was granted after the extra *parshah* was added to the Torah. This raises the questions: Why was Yisro's decision to join Klal Yisroel not acknowledged right away? Furthermore, why was it merely recognised with an add-on to the name יֵתָר that he received for increasing Torah?

He explains that it was only after Yisro merited to add a *parshah* in the Torah - transforming himself and receiving a new identity reflected in his new name יֵתָר - that his *mitzvos* were cherished to the

extent that he received an addition to his original name, becoming יִתְרוֹ. After Yisro became a changed person due to the אור התורה, his *mitzvos* gained the remarkable power to grant him a new name.

This profound concept can be understood through the following insight. The *possuk* (*Mishlei* 9:5) states: לֵכוּ לֶחֱמוּ בִלְחֶמִי וּשְׁתוּ בַיַּיִן מִסֻּכְתִּי: “Come, partake of my bread and drink of the wine that I have mixed.” Chazal interpret this phrase as referring to the study of Torah. Rav Dessler (*Michtav M’Eliyahu* vol. 3, p. 189) cites the Kadmonim who write that Torah learning is symbolised by bread and wine, which nourish the *neshomah*, and *mitzvos* are likened to garments that clothe the soul.

R’ Dessler clarifies this metaphor by explaining that *mitzvos* do not become part of a person's physical being; instead, they are compared to clothes for the soul. Just as clothing covers the body, *mitzvos* serve to cover the *neshomah*. In contrast, the Torah transforms a person and is therefore likened to man's nourishment. Just as sustenance is absorbed into the body and becomes part of one's flesh and bones, the Torah that one learns becomes an integral part of a person and elevates his *neshomah*.

He cites the Tanya, which explains that while actions serve as garments for the soul, Torah has a dual function. Reciting the holy words of Torah is like performing any other *mitzvah*, where the act serves as a garment for the soul. However, when one toils to engage their intellect to understand the depths of Torah, it enters a new dimension. By using one's mind to grasp the Divine wisdom found in the Torah, a person acquires spiritual nourishment that becomes part of their very essence. Learning Torah at a surface level yields effects similar to those of any other *mitzvah*. In contrast, when someone sincerely delves into the study of Torah, the transformation that occurs is beyond imagination.

R’ Dessler concludes that Torah and *mitzvos* function together. *Mitzvos* provide the framework for the *neshomah*, which becomes elevated and transformed through diligent and sincere study of Torah. After genuinely transforming one's spiritual self through Torah study, even the performance of *mitzvos* takes on new meaning. The Torah influences and elevates all a person's *mitzvos* and actions.

This idea can also be found in Rashi's commentary on the *possuk* (*Tehillim* 1:1-2): כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת ה' הִפְצִו, וּבְתוֹרַתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וּלְיָלַיִל. Rashi explains that while the study is initially referred to as Hashem's Torah, after a person has diligently toiled at it, it transforms into his own Torah. At first, engaging in the study of Torah is akin to any other *mitzvah*; it spiritually envelops a person, and it remains Hashem's Torah. However, once a person invests effort into studying Torah, it penetrates his very essence and becomes his own Torah.

With the above insight, we can understand why Yisro was given an entirely new name for the original Torah he introduced, while his acceptance of *mitzvos* only resulted in an addition to his name. This also explains why he received recognition for his *mitzvos* only after he developed a new *parshah* in the Torah. Yisro's transformed spiritual self gave new significance to his *mitzvos*, making him deserving of a different name to honour this change.

This lesson highlights the profound impact that in-depth Torah study has on an individual. While regular study of Torah is undoubtedly powerful and serves to spiritually enrich a person, it operates on a level similar to that of other *mitzvos* – spiritually clothing a person. In contrast, when Torah is studied deeply, it not only penetrates the person more profoundly, transforming and elevating his *neshomah* to remarkable heights, but it also enhances his *mitzvah* performance.

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