



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 16 | Yisro | Sichah 2

LIKKUTEI SICHOS, VOLUME 16, P. 203FF. Adapted from a sichah delivered on 15th Shvat, 5735 [1975]

לקוטי שיחות חלק טז יתרו ב

Delegating More than Authority

Translated by Rabbi Eli Touger and Rabbi Sholom Ber Wineberg

Great effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time striving for readability. However, the translation carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. **Your feedback is needed** — please send all comments to:

info@projectlikkuteisichos.org

תרגום חופשי ללשון הקודש
Hebrew text copyrighted by Kehot
English text copyrighted by Sichos in English

Introduction

Sometimes a question is so obvious you wonder why it was not asked before. Take for example, the dialogue recorded shortly after the beginning of this week's Torah reading:

Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law, reproaches him for having the entire Jewish people wait for his judgment on every matter. After consulting with G-d, Moshe conceded and adopted his father-in-law's suggestion to do what is practical – he appointed judges to arbitrate the day-to-day disputes that arise between Jews.

So what was he thinking originally? Why didn't he recognize a difficulty that was so self-evident?

In the *sichah* that follows, the Rebbe answers these questions by focusing on who Moshe was.

Each one of us has experienced what it means to stand before a truly great person, someone who is not merely incrementally wiser or more emotionally developed, but who towers head and shoulders above us.

When we're in the presence of such a person, we experience two conflicting emotions. On the one hand, we feel small; we sense our own insignificance. But that isn't all we feel. We also feel empowered – we see the possibility of rising above our own limitations and identifying with a greater and deeper purpose.

Moshe knew this. He realized what happened when Jews came into his presence. They forgot about their individual concerns and shared in his vision. That was the reason he thought he could judge them – because when they came to him, they didn't quibble.

They were able to look at themselves and their fellowmen in a different light.

Moshe wanted the Jewish people to live on this level. He saw it as possible because, when they were in his presence, they were able to step beyond who they ordinarily were. That was his initial perspective and that is why he thought he could judge them himself.

Yisro didn't look with Moshe's eyes. He saw the people as they actually were. He didn't look at them negatively, but he did look at them realistically. From that perspective, there was a huge gap between who the people were and what Moshe aspired for them to be. Therefore, he pointed out the need for Moshe to delegate authority, to appoint judges who could relate to people on their own level, communicating the Torah's judgments to them within the context of their day-to-day realities.

Moshe listened to Yisro, posed the question to G-d, and then accepted his father-in-law's suggestion.

Was he conceding his position, giving up on the Jewish people ever reaching the goals he had set for them?

No. Yisro opened him up to a new way of seeing things. Moshe could invest himself, his inner spirit, in the other judges and they would communicate to the people on their level. They would be teaching Moshe's Torah, G-d's Torah, but it would be communicated in a manner that did not require the people to rise above their ordinary circumstances. On the contrary, it would enable them to elevate and align themselves with the vision G-d charted for them in the Torah within the realities of their day-to-day setting, and ultimately transform it into a dwelling for G-d.

What a Visitor Sees

1. This week's Torah reading relates that when Yisro¹ saw Moshe sitting,² "to judge the people... from the morning until the evening," he protested,³ "Why are you sitting alone, while the entire nation is standing before you from the morning until the evening?... Both you and the people will wither." He then advised Moshe,⁴ *Ve'atah sechezeh...* "Select from among all of the people capable, G-d-fearing men..." i.e., that Moshe should choose "leaders over thousands..."⁴ to judge the people on a continuous basis regarding their minor affairs, and only judge "major matters"⁵ himself. In this manner, Yisro assured him,⁶ "You will endure and this entire people will reach its destination intact."

This leads to a series of obvious questions:⁷ How is it that Moshe, the faithful shepherd of the Jewish people, did not realize this himself? Why was he not concerned that by judging the people alone in all matters, both he and they would become worn out? Why didn't he conceive this most simple plan – to appoint judges to assist him in arbitrating the people's disputes? Why was it necessary for Yisro, the leader of Midian, who visited only briefly, to come to this realization and ensure that it be enacted?

True, there is a popular saying,⁸ "A guest for a while sees for a mile," while a local person may occasionally overlook even the obvious. But Heaven forbid, to say that Moshe — whom G-d Himself chose as the shepherd of Israel from the moment of his birth⁹ and who had already

א. בַּפְּרִשְׁתָּנוּ מְסוּפֵר, שְׁבַרְאוֹת יִתְרוֹ אֶת מֹשֶׁה רִבִּינוּ יוֹשֵׁב "לְשֹׁפֹט אֶת הָעָם. . מִן הַבֹּקֶר עַד הָעֶרֶב", טָעַן לְפָנָיו – "מִדּוּעַ אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב לְבַדְּךָ וְכָל הָעָם נֹצֵב עֲלֶיךָ מִן הַבֹּקֶר עַד הָעֶרֶב. . נְבוֹל תְּבוּל גַּם אַתָּה גַּם הָעָם גּוֹ"; וְהִשִּׂיא לּוֹ הָעֵצָה "וְאַתָּה תַחֲזֶה גּוֹ", שְׂיִבְחַר מֹשֶׁה "שְׂרֵי אֲלָפִים וּגּוֹ" אֲשֶׁר "יִשְׁפְּטוּ" אֶת הָעָם בְּכָל עֵת, "וְרַק "הַדָּבָר הַגָּדוֹל יָבִיאוּ אֵלֶיךָ", וְעַ"י הַנְּהִיגָה כְּזוֹ – אֲזִי "וְיִכְלַת עֲמַד וְגַם כָּל הָעָם הַזֶּה עַל מְקוֹמוֹ יָבֵא בְשָׁלוֹם".

וְיִדְוֶעַה הַתְּמִיהָה בְּזֶה: אִיךָ יִתְכַן שְׂמֹשֶׁה רִבִּינוּ, רַעֲיָא מְהִימְנָא שְׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל, לֹא חֲשַׁשׁ בְּעֵצְמוֹ שְׂאוּפֵן הַנְּהִיגָתוֹ יָבִיא לְכָךְ שְׁ"נְבוֹל גּוֹ" הָעָם גּוֹ", וְלֹא עָלְתָה בְּדַעְתּוֹ הָעֵצָה הַכִּי פְּשׁוּטָה לְמִנּוֹת שׁוֹפְטִים שְׂיִסְיִיעוּ "לְשֹׁפֹט אֶת הָעָם"; וְדוּקָא יִתְרוֹ כְּהוּ מְדִין, שְׁהִגִּיעַ לְמְקוֹמָם לְמִשְׁפָּחָם זְמַן קָצֵר, הוּא שְׁהִבִין זֹאת וְהִבִּיא אֶת הַדָּבָר לִיְדֵי פּוֹעֵל?

[יִשְׁנֵנוּ מֵאֲמֵר הָעוֹלָם וְעַמָּא דְּבַר: "א גַּאסְט פֶּאָר א ווִייל, זַעט אױף א מײל" (אױרױח הַבֵּא לְרַגַע רוּאָה לְמַרְחָק מִי), הֵיִינוּ שְׂדוּקָא אָדָם הַנִּמְצָא עַל אֶתְרָא עָלוּל שְׁלֹא לְהַבְחִין אֲפִילוֹ בְּדָבָר הַפְּשׁוּט –

¹ Moshe's father-in-law.

² *Shmos* 18:13.

³ *Ibid.* 18:14, 18.

⁴ *Ibid.* 18:21.

⁵ See *ibid.* 18:22.

⁶ *Ibid.* 18:23.

⁷ See *Akeidas Yitzchak, Abarbanel, Sifsei Kohan's commentary to the Torah, et al.* on this passage.

⁸ See *Berachos 45a*, from which it is apparent that insights can be gained from the conduct of people at large. See also *Bava Kama 92a* ff., from which it is apparent that popular sayings can be associated with Torah concepts.

⁹ See our Sages' comments (*Shmos Rabbah* 2:4, et al.) on *Shmos* 3:1: *Shmos Rabbah* 1:18, 21–22, 24.

actually served as the Jews' faithful shepherd for a given time¹⁰ — did not have this awareness until Yisro came and spurred him to act concerning this matter.

This leads to the understanding that Moshe saw things differently, and from Moshe's vantage point, *this was the reality*. In his view, he alone could (and, moreover, should) personally involve himself with judging the people,¹¹ seeing to not only their major matters, but also their minor concerns. Nevertheless, this would not lead to negative consequences, neither for him nor for the Jewish people as a whole. Indeed, he would “endure and this entire people [would] reach its destination intact.”

Further support for the conception that Moshe's “judging the people... from the morning until the evening” is a true path according to the Torah – and thus would certainly prevent Moshe and the Jewish people from becoming “worn out” – can be derived from our Sages' statement¹² regarding another name for Yisro, **Yesser**, and regarding the name **Yisro** itself.¹³ Our Sages state that he was so named “because he added a passage (*sheyitar*

אָבֵל ח"ו לומר בְּנוּגַע לְמֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ, אֲשֶׁר נִבְחַר ע"י הַקַּב"ה עֲצָמוֹ מִרְגַע הַנּוֹלָדוֹ לְהִיּוֹת רוּעָה יִשְׂרָאֵל – וְכִבֵּר הָיָה הַרוּעָה הַנֶּאֱמָן שֶׁל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּפוּעַל לְמִשְׁפַּחַת זְמַן – שְׁלֹא יָדַע זֹאת עַד שֶׁבָּא יִתְרוֹ וְעוֹרְרוּ עָלָיו.¹⁰

וּמִזֶּה גּוֹפֵא מוּבָן, שֶׁבְּעֵינֵי מֹשֶׁה – וּמֵצֵד מִדְּרִיגַת מֹשֶׁה כֵּן הוּא בְּאֶמְתּוֹ – הָיָה הוּא לְבַדּוֹ יָכוֹל (וַיִּתְיָרָה מִזּוֹ – הוּא לְבַדּוֹ הָיָה צָרִיף) לְהִתְעַסֵּק בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָעָם, בֵּין בְּ"דִבְרֵי הַגְּדוֹל" וּבֵין בְּ"דִבְרֵי הַקָּטָן", וּבְכָל זֹאת לֹא הָיָה הַדְּבָר מִזִּיק לֹא לוֹ וְלֹא לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲלֵא – "וַיִּכְלַת עֲמֹד וְגַם כָּל הָעָם הָזֶה עַל מְקוֹמוֹ יָבֹא בְּשָׁלוֹם".

וְהוֹכַחָה נֹסֶפֶת לְדָבָר – שֶׁהִנְהַגַּת מֹשֶׁה "לְשָׁפוֹט אֶת הָעָם . . מִן הַבֶּקֶר עַד הָעֶרֶב" הִיא הַדְּרָגָה הָאֲמִיתִית ע"פ תּוֹרָה (וּמִמִּילָא, בְּוֹדָאֵי יָגֵן הַדְּבָר עַל מֹשֶׁה מִפְּנֵי מִצַּב שֶׁל "נְבוּל תְּבוּל גו") – אֲפֹשֶׁר לְלַמּוֹד מִמֶּאֱמָר חֲז"ל שֶׁהֵשֵׁם "יִתְר" (אוּ "יִתְרוֹ") הוּא

¹⁰ See *Shmos* 2:11, which states, “Moshe came of age... and he went out to his brethren.” See the opinions in *Shmos Rabbah* 1:27 and the sources cited there regarding Moshe's age at that time.

¹¹ See *Rashi* and *Sifri*, *Devarim* 1:9, “Was it possible that Moshe was unable to judge Israel...? See also *Devarim Rabbah* 1:10–11.

¹² *Rashi*, *Shmos* 18:1, based on the *Mechilta* to this verse; *Shmos Rabbah* 27:8; *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Yisro*, sec. 4; *Sifri* and *Rashi* to *Bamidbar* 10:29, et al.

¹³ *Sifri* and *Shmos Rabbah*, op. cit.; *Rashi*, *Bamidbar*, op. cit. It is possible to reconcile the discrepancy between the names for Yisro mentioned by our Sages by explaining that he was originally named **Yesser** (יִתְר) as an indication that in the future he would add a passage in the Torah. See Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura, *Levush HaOrah*, *Divrei David*, et al.

on *Rashi*, *Shmos*, loc. cit. After his advice was actually taken, one letter – *vav*, the first letter of the passage beginning *Ve'atah sechezeh* – was added to his name, producing the name **Yisro** (יִתְרוֹ).

* Several of the printed versions of *Rashi's* commentary to *Bamidbar* cited in footnote 12 refer to Yisro with the name **Yesser**. This is also the version found in the commentary of *Rabboseinu Baalei HaTosafos* (*Hadar Zekeinim*; see also *Daas Zekeinim*) and *Rivo* (on *Shmos* 18:1). However, the initial printings, the majority of the manuscripts of *Rashi's* commentary, and the version cited by a number of the supercommentaries on *Rashi* (Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartenura, Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi, *Divrei David* to *Shmos* 18:1) refer to him as **Yisro**.

parshah) to the Torah, [i.e., the passage beginning] *Ve'atah sechezeh*."

Our Sages use the wording, "he added a passage to the Torah" and not that he was worthy of having a passage of the Torah "delivered (or written due) to him," as is stated regarding other passages of the Torah.¹⁴ This choice of wording indicates that not only was the passage beginning *Ve'atah sechezeh* revealed by Yisro, but furthermore, Yisro brought about an increase and addition to the Torah, as it were. Through him was added this passage, which was previously not included in the Torah as it existed by itself.¹⁵

Extending that concept, it is understood that before Yisro brought about this addition, the Torah itself – the "Torah of Truth" – did not prescribe the path of conduct stated in the passage beginning *Ve'atah sechezeh*. Instead, Moshe himself was to judge every concern of the people.¹⁶ For that reason, Moshe – whose life was solely Torah – conducted himself in this manner.

Accordingly, the question then becomes reversed: Since had Moshe conducted himself in this manner, he would nevertheless, "endure and this entire people [would] reach its destination intact," what then aroused concern that Moshe's approach would cause

"על שם שיתר פְּרָשָׁה אַחַת בַּתּוֹרָה וְאַתָּה תַּחֲזֶה."

מִזֶּה שְׁדַּיִיקוּ חֲזוֹ"ל לומר "שיתר פְּרָשָׁה אַחַת בַּתּוֹרָה" – וְלֹא אָמְרוּ שְׂזָכָה שְׁפָרְשָׁה זוֹ "נְאֻמָּה (אוּ "נִכְתָּבָה") עַל יָדוֹ" (עַל-דֶּרֶךְ הַלְשׁוֹן שְׁמַצִּינוּ בְּנוֹגַע לְפָרָשִׁיּוֹת אַחֲרוֹת בַּתּוֹרָה) – מִשְׁמַע, שְׁלֹא זוֹ בְּלִבְדֵּי שַׁע"י יִתְרוֹ נִתְגַּלְתָּה הַפְּרָשָׁה "וְאַתָּה תַּחֲזֶה", אֲלֵא יִתְּרָה מִזֶּה: יִתְרוֹ חִידֵשׁ וְגָרַם כְּבִיכּוֹל יִתְרוֹן (וְהוֹסֵפָה) בַּתּוֹרָה – עַל-יָדוֹ נוֹסֵפָה בַּתּוֹרָה פְּרִשְׁת "וְאַתָּה תַּחֲזֶה" (שְׁלֹא הִיְתָה קוֹדֵם לָזֶה בַּתּוֹרָה מִצַּד עֲצָמָה).

וּמִמִּילָא מוֹבָן, שְׁלִפְנֵי שְׁגָרַם יִתְרוֹ לְהוֹסֵפֵת פְּרָשָׁה זוֹ בַּתּוֹרָה, הִנָּה מִצַּד תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת גּוֹפֵא לֹא הָיָה קָיָים סֵדֶר הַהִנְהָגָה שֶׁל "וְאַתָּה תַּחֲזֶה", אֲלֵא הָיָה עַל מֹשֶׁה עֲצָמוֹ לְשַׁפּוֹט אֶת הָעָם בְּכָל דְּבַר. וְזֶהוּ הַטַּעַם לְכַן שְׁמֹשֶׁה רַבִּינוּ, אֲשֶׁר כָּל עֲנִיָּנוֹ הוּא תּוֹרָה, נִהַג כֵּן בְּאוֹתָהּ שְׁעָה.

אֲלֵא שַׁעפ"ז עֲדִיין אִינוּ מוֹבָן לְאִדָּךְ גִּיסָא: מֵאַחַר שְׁגָם ע"י הַנְּהַגַת מֹשֶׁה הִנָּה "וְיִכְלַת עֲמוֹד וְגַם כָּל הָעָם הִזָּה עַל מְקוֹמוֹ יָבֹא בְּשָׁלוֹם" – אִם כֵּן, מִזִּין נִתְחַדֵּשׁ וְנוֹצֵר מְקוֹם לְחֻשְׁשׁוֹ שֶׁל יִתְרוֹ,

¹⁴ *Sifri*, and *Rashi* to *Bamidbar* 9:7 (8), 27:5; *Bava Basra* 119a; *Sanhedrin* 8a.

¹⁵ *Sifri*, *Bamidbar* 10:29, states that content of the passage *Ve'atah sechezeh* "had already been [given to] Moshe at Sinai....* Why did it become obscured from Moshe's eyes?... So that the matter would be attributed to Yisro." Nevertheless, the wording, "he added a passage," indicates that Yisro's advice given in this passage was an addition to the Torah, as stated in the main text. See the explanations in footnote 65 below. See the lengthy explanation of this concept according to *Chassidus* in the beginning of *Or HaTorah*, *Shmos*, Vol. 3, and the *maamar* entitled *Vayomer Moshe el Yehoshua*, 5709, ch. 6–7, that Yisro was able to introduce the motif of

"the higher quality of light (*yisron haor*) coming from the darkness" into the Torah. This is the implication of the words *yiter parshah*, "he added a passage."

* I.e., Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the author of this passage of the *Sifri*, interprets the words of Yisro to Moshe (*Shmos* 18:23), *vitzivcha Elokim*, as meaning, "as G-d commanded you." The intent is that the command to appoint judges had been given to Moshe at Sinai, but Moshe forgot it and Yisro was calling it to his attention.

¹⁶ To cite a somewhat parallel ruling (*Rambam*, *Hilchos Sanhedrin* 20:10): "One should always regard a judgment concerning 100,000 silver pieces and one *p'rutah* as equal in importance in all regards."

him and the people to become worn out and “the matter to [become] too burdensome”¹⁷ for him?

Following Precedent

2. Yisro made his observation – that Moshe had misjudged his potential and that of the Jewish people – after the second set of Tablets was given on Yom Kippur.¹⁸ According to Yisro’s understanding, Moshe could and should teach the Jewish people “the statutes of G-d and His laws” but personally judge them only concerning major matters.¹⁹ Matters of lesser concern should be arbitrated by the judges Moshe would appoint.

This suggestion bears a resemblance to a situation that occurred previously – directly after the Jews heard the Ten Commandments, (which were later inscribed on the first set of Tablets) – when the Jews protested that they could no longer bear hearing “the voice of our G-d any longer,”²⁰ and they requested of Moshe, “You speak to us.”²¹

At that time, Moshe expressed his displeasure with their request, answering them – according to *Rashi* (who focuses on the use of the feminine *at*, meaning “you”) – “You sapped my strength, making me weak like a female, for I was distressed regarding you, and you weakened my [power].... Would it not have been preferable for you to learn [directly] from the mouth of the Almighty, rather than to learn from me?”

שְׁהִנְהִיגַת מֹשֶׁה עֲלוּלָה לְהִבְיֵא לְמִצָּב שֶׁל “נְבוּל תַּבּוּל גּוֹ”, וְשׁ”כֵּבֵד מִמּוֹה הַדְּבָר”?

ב. וְהִנֵּה, עֲנִין זֶה בְּשִׁיכוֹת לְטַעֲנַת יִתְרוֹ – שֶׁהִיְתָה לְאַחֲרֵי (הַלּוּחוֹת הַשְּׁנִיּוֹת שֶׁל) יוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים – שֶׁמֹּשֶׁה אָמַד בְּדַעְתּוֹ אֶת (עֲצָמוֹ וְאֶת) יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁלֹּא כָּפִי הָעוֹלָה מִטַּעֲנַת יִתְרוֹ, כִּנְ”ל, שֶׁאֵין הֵם יְכוּלִים וְאֵינָם צְרִיכִים לְהַשְׁפִּיט עִי מֹשֶׁה עֲצָמוֹ וְלִלְמוּד מִפִּי כִי אִם אֶת מִשְׁפָּט “הַדְּבָר הַגָּדוֹל” וְ”אֶת חוֹקֵי הָאֱלֹקִים וְאֶת תּוֹרוֹתָיו”,

הָרִי הוּא בְּדוּמָה לְמָה שֶׁמִּצְיָנוֹ קוֹדֵם לְכֵן – תִּיכַף לְאַחַר עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרוֹת (הַלּוּחוֹת הָרִאשׁוֹנוֹת), בְּשִׁיכוֹת לְטַעֲנַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁאֵין בִּיכְלָתָם לְשִׂאת אֶת שְׁמִיעַת “קוֹל ה’ אֱלֹקֵינוּ עוֹד”, וּבִקְשָׁתָם מִמֹּשֶׁה “וְאֶת תְּדַבֵּר אֵלֵינוּ” –

שֶׁטַעַן מֹשֶׁה (כְּפִירוֹשׁ רַשִׁ”י, אֲשֶׁר “וְאֶת” – לְשׁוֹן נִקְבָּה – מִשְׁמָעוֹ) “הַתְּשָׁתָם אֶת כּוֹחֵי כְּנִקְבָּה שֶׁנִּצְטַעַרְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם וְרַפִּיתֶם אֶת יָדַי... וְכִי לֹא הָיָה יָפָה לָכֶם לְלַמּוֹד מִפִּי הַגְּבוּרָה וְלֹא לְלַמּוֹד מִמֶּנִּי”.

¹⁷ *Shmos* 18:18.

¹⁸ *Mechilta and Rashi, Shmos* 18:13. Although there is a difference of opinion among our Sages regarding when Yisro came to visit Moshe and the Jewish people – before or after the Giving of the Torah – these sources indicate that even the Sages who maintain that Yisro came before the Giving of the Torah concede that he gave this advice after Yom Kippur. See the commentary of Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi, et al., on *Rashi, loc. cit.* Nevertheless, *Rabboseinu Baalei*

HaTosafos and others maintain that Yisro gave his advice before the Giving of the Torah. This is not the place for further discussion of the matter.

¹⁹ *Shmos* 18:16.

²⁰ *Devarim* 5:22. See also *Shmos* 20:16 and *Ramban’s* commentary on *Shmos* 20:15.

²¹ *Devarim* 5:24.

In other words, as Moshe viewed the Jewish people, they should have desired – and they possessed the potential – to learn Torah directly from the mouth of the Almighty. Nevertheless, G-d accepted their request, telling Moshe,²² “All they have spoken was well said.” (Similarly, here, G-d accepted Yisro’s suggestion,²³ resulting in the inclusion of *Ve’atah sechezeh...* as a passage in the Torah.)

A conceptual difficulty similar to that explained above arises with regard to Moshe’s desire that the Jews learn Torah directly from G-d: There is a radical difference between Moshe’s conception of the Jewish people’s level (that they are capable of learning from G-d directly) and their actual level (that they had to learn from Moshe). The difference between these two points of view is immense, literally from one extreme to the other. This is evident from the fact that Moshe’s response to learning the Jews’ true state “sapped [his] strength, [making him] weak like a female.” The question thus arises: How is it possible that Moshe, the Jews’ shepherd and mentor, erred so drastically in appraising the level of his flock?

A Leader’s Ability to Influence his People

3. The following resolution to the above quandary can be offered: It is not that Moshe erred, G-d forbid, in his appraisal of the Jews’ level. Instead, when Moshe looked at the Jewish people as they stood together with him,²⁴ he saw that they functioned on a level far loftier than their inherent stature. By Moshe elevating them and drawing them close to his level,²⁵ they operated on a higher plane, one on

כלומר: ע"פ אומד דעתו של משה היו בני ישראל צריכים לבקש ללמוד תורה "מפי הגבורה", שכן הדבר היה ביכלתם, ומכל מקום קיבל הקב"ה את טענת בני ישראל – "היטיבו כל אשר דברו" [כבנידון דידן, שהסכים הקב"ה לעצת יתרו, והדבר אף נעשה לפרשה בתורה].

ואף בנידון זה קשה: הלא החילוק בין מדרגת ישראל ע"פ מה ששיער משה (שביכלתם ללמוד מפי הגבורה) לדרגת מצבם בפועל (שהוצרכו ללמוד מפי משה), הוא מן הקצה אל הקצה [כמובן מזה שהידיעה על-דבר מצבם פעלה במשה ש"התשתם את כוחי כנקבה"] – ואם כן, איך יתכן לומר שמשה רבינו, הרועה והמפרנס דכלל ישראל, לא כינו כביכול אל נכון (ובזה גופא – עד כדי כף), באומד מצבם של צאן מרעיתו?

ג. אחד מהביאורים שאפשר לומר בזה:

אין פירוש הדבר שמשה רבינו טעה ח"ו באומד מצבם של בני ישראל, אלא הפונוה בזה היא – שבשעה שמשה רבינו מביט על בני ישראל (בשעה שהם ניצבים יחד עם משה), הרי הם באמת

²² *Ibid.* 5:25.

²³ G-d’s acceptance of Yisro’s suggestion is indicated by *Rashi* (based on *Mechilta*), *Shmos* 18:19, 23, who states that Yisro told Moshe, “Consult with the Almighty.” See also *Rashi*, *Devarim* 1:9, 12 (based on *Sifri*, *loc. cit.*), who describes Moshe as telling the Jewish people that “I did not tell you [to appoint judges] on my own [initiative,] but on G-d’s.”

²⁴ Note our Sages’ teaching (*Berachos* 8a), “A person should always live in the place of his teacher, for as long as Shimi ben Gera was alive, (King) Shlomoh did not marry the daughter of Pharaoh,” i.e., a teacher elevates a student above his own natural tendencies.

²⁵ See *Etz Chayim*, *Shaar HaKlallim*, ch. 11, and *Shaar HaPesukim*, the beginning of *Parshas Shmos*, et al., which

which they were capable of learning and receiving the Torah directly from the Almighty. Therefore, just as Moshe learned Torah directly from the Almighty, so too, he could affect the Jewish people and raise them to the level where they could also learn directly from the Almighty.

The Jews responded to Moshe, acknowledging that at the times when he elevates them to a higher rung, they would be capable of learning Torah directly from the Almighty. Nevertheless, they contended that this was possible only because Moshe elevated them to such a level. They, however, desired to accept the Torah according to their own intellectual capacity, with their own powers,²⁶ on their own intrinsic level. G-d responded to their contention, "All they have spoken was well said," agreeing to their request because, in this way, the Jews would accept and identify with the Torah, integrating it within their beings in an internalized manner.²⁷

A Leader's Sacrifice

4. On this basis, it is possible to understand the precise wording Rashi uses to describe Moshe's response to the people, "You sapped my strength, [making me weak] like a female." Those words emphasize not only the anguish Moshe felt "I was distressed regarding you" – but primarily, the sense of weakness generated within Moshe, "you weakened my [power]." How is it appropriate to say that as a result of their response Moshe's power became weakened?

describe the Kabbalistic conception of the spiritual level of the people of Moshe's generation. See also *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar*, p. 31d.

²⁶ Note our Sages' teaching (*Bava Metzia 38a*), "A person desires a *kab* (a Talmudic measure) of his own more than

במעמד ומצב נעלה יותר, באופן שיש ביכולתם באותה שעה ללמוד ולקבל תורה מפי הגבורה, כיון שמשנה מרומם אותם ומקרבתם למדרגתו (ולפיקה), כשם שלמד הוא תורה מפי הגבורה, כן פועל הוא על בני ישראל שיוכלו אף הם ללמוד מפי הגבורה).

אלא שעל כף טענו בני ישראל: מה שביכולתם ללמוד תורה מפי הגבורה, הרי אין זה אלא מפני שמשנה מרומם אותם לדרגה כזו; ועל כן מבוקשם הוא – ברצונם "לתפוס" את התורה בכלי ההשגה שלהם, בכחותיהם הפרטיים ובמעמד ומצב שבו עומדים הם מצד עצמם. ועל זה אמר הקב"ה "היטיבו כל אשר דברו", כי באופן זה תתקבל בהם התורה ותיקלט בפנימיותם.

ד. ובזה יובן דיוק הלשון "התשתם את כוחי כנקה" אשר (אינו מורה רק על הרגש של צער, "נצטערתי עליכם", אלא) מודגש בו בעיקר ענין החלישות ("ורפיתם את ידי"). דלכאורה, מה ענין חלישות כחו של משה לכאן?

nine *kabbim* belonging to a friend." Similarly, the Jews desired to learn the Torah on their intrinsic level rather than on the level to which Moshe would raise them.

²⁷ Note our Sages' statement (*Avodah Zarah 19a*), "A person should always study in the place his heart desires."

To explain: In order for Moshe to teach the Torah to the Jewish people in the manner they desired – “You speak to us,” i.e. on our level – Moshe had to descend from his own rung.²⁸ Were he to shine forth as Moshe, with all his intensity, the Jews would be elevated to his level – and then the Jews would not need to learn Torah from Moshe; they would be able to learn from the Almighty directly. However, as explained above, they did not desire this, nor did G-d desire it of them.

Therefore, to make the transition that would enable him to teach the Torah to them on their level, Moshe’s strength had to first be weakened “like a female,” i.e., he had to diminish his strength and descend from his own rung.²⁸ As a result, it would be possible for him to serve as an intermediary between G-d and the Jews and convey G-d’s word to them in a way that they could internalize.

Enabling the People to Be Their Best Possible Selves

5. When the time came for Moshe to begin teaching the Torah to the Jewish people – i.e., after he received the Torah from the Almighty at Sinai and after the second set of Tablets was given on Yom Kippur – his conception was that the Jews should receive all the Torah’s teachings directly from him.²⁹ Since Moshe was taught the Torah “from the mouth of the Almighty” Himself, he felt that no one else could possibly convey “the word of G-d” with the full power and intensity of G-d’s light.³⁰

וההסברה בזה: כְּדִי שְׁמֹשֶׁה רְבִינוּ יוֹכֵל לְלַמּוֹד תּוֹרָה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּפִי רְצוֹנָם, “וְאֵת תְּדַבֵּר אֵלֵינוּ”, הִיא מוּכָרַח לְהִשְׁפִּיל עַצְמוֹ מִמְדְּרֵיגָתוֹ. כִּי בְּאֵם תְּאִיר בְּאוֹתָהּ שְׁעָה בְּחֵינֵת “מֹשֶׁה” בְּגִלּוּי וּבְכָל הַתּוֹקֶף, יִתְרוֹמְמוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְ(דְרָגַת מֹשֶׁה –) מִדְּרֵיגָה שְׁבָה צְרִיכִים הֵם לְלַמּוֹד (לֹא “מִמְּנִי”, מִמֹּשֶׁה, אֲלֵא) “מִפִּי הַגְּבוּרָה”.

וְלִכֵּן בְּהִכָּרַח שְׁתַּחֲוִּילָה יְהֵא תַשׁ כַּחוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה כְּנִקְבָּה – חֲלִישוֹת וִירִידָה בְּמִדְּרֵיגַת מֹשֶׁה – וְעִי”ז יְהִי בִּיכְלָתוֹ אַחֵר כֶּף לְשִׁמּוֹשׁ מִמוּצָע בֵּין הַקַּב”ה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וּלְמִסוֹר לָהֶם אֵת דְּבַר ה’.

ה. כְּאֲשֶׁר הִגִּיעַ הַזְּמַן שָׁבוּ הַיּוֹצְרֵי מֹשֶׁה לְהַתְחִיל לְלַמּוֹד תּוֹרָה עִם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – לְאַחַר שֶׁקִּיבַל תּוֹרָה מִפִּי הַגְּבוּרָה בְּהַר סִינַי, וּלְאַחֲרֵי נְתִינַת הַלוּחוֹת הַשְּׁנִיּוֹת בְּיוֹם הַכִּיפּוּרִים – הִיא סְבוּר שְׁעַל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְשִׁמוֹעַ אֵת כָּל עֲנִינֵי הַתּוֹרָה בְּאוֹפֵן יִשָּׁר מִמְּנֵו עַצְמוֹ.

²⁸ See *Sefer HaMaamarim 5628*, p. 66, and the lengthy explanation in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 8, p. 75ff.

²⁹ See *Sifri and Rashi to Devarim 1:14* regarding the appointment of “the heads of thousands...” the people should have told Moshe, “From whom is it befitting to study the Torah: from you or your students...? Obviously, from you, for you underwent anguish because of [the people].” See “the order of the transmission of the Torah” related by *Eruvin 54b* and *Rashi, Shmos 34:32*, that “the entire people” heard the teachings from Moshe himself at least once.

³⁰ See *Eruvin, loc. cit.*, which states, “Since Moshe learned from the mouth of the Almighty, the matter [received from him] would more [powerfully] affect [the listener].” Note *Rashi, Bamidbar 3:1*, which speaks about the results of Aharon’s sons studying with Moshe, that “They became his offspring because he taught them what he learned from the mouth of the Almighty.” See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 23, p.11ff which states that, for this reason, the concept (*Rashi, loc. cit.*) that “Everyone who teaches Torah to the son of another person is considered as if he parented him” applies primarily to Moshe. (Accordingly, *Rashi* does not content himself with the words, “is considered as if he parented him,” but adds, “They became his offspring.”)

Moreover, since he stood, as he told the people, “between G-d and you... to convey to you the word of G-d”³¹ and, particularly, because “the Divine presence spoke from his throat,”³² when the Jews would hear the Torah from him, it would be as if they heard it “from the mouth of the Almighty.”³³

This can be inferred from the precise wording of Moshe’s response to Yisro’s objection to his judging the people by himself, “Because the people come to me to seek G-d,” which *Rashi* interprets as meaning, “to ask [me] for teachings from the mouth of the Almighty,”³⁴ i.e., being taught by Moshe was like receiving “teachings from the mouth of the Almighty.”³⁵

Furthermore, since Moshe would elevate the Jewish people and raise them to his level, they would be able to receive the Torah from him like he received it from the Almighty.

To use terminology employed by *Chassidus*: Moshe was on the level of “sight”³⁶ and received the Torah from the Almighty in a manner associated with that rung.³⁷ Firstly, the manner in which a person responds to the description of an event conveyed by someone

דְּכִיּוֹן שְׁמִשָּׁה הוּא שְׁלֵמֵד תּוֹרָה
”מִפִּי הַגְּבוּרָה” עֲצָמוֹ, הָרִי אֵין
בִּיכּוּלֵת אֶף אֶחָד מְלַבְדּוֹ לְמִסּוֹר
אֶת דְּבַר ה’ עִם כָּל הָאוֹר וְכוּ’;
וַיִּתִּירָה מִזּוֹ: בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ מִי שְׁעֵלְיוֹ
נֶאֱמַר ”אֲנֹכִי עוֹמֵד בֵּין ה’ וּבֵינֵיכֶם
גּוֹ’ לְהַגִּיד לָכֶם אֶת דְּבַר ה’”, וּבִפְרָט
שְׁשִׁכְיָנָה מְדַבֶּרֶת מִתּוֹךְ גְּרוֹנוֹ שֶׁל
מֹשֶׁה – נִמְצָא, שְׁפֹאֲשֶׁר שׁוֹמְעִים
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תּוֹרָה מִפִּי מֹשֶׁה, הָרִי
זֶה כְּאִילוֹ הֵם שׁוֹמְעִים זֹאת ”מִפִּי
הַגְּבוּרָה”.

[וְזֶהוּ דְיוֹק הַלְשׁוֹן בְּמַעֲנֵה מֹשֶׁה עַל
טַעֲנַת יִתְרוֹ (מִפִּי מַה שׁוֹפֵט הוּא
בְּעֲצָמוֹ אֶת הָעָם) – ”כִּי יָבֵא אֵלַי
הָעָם לְדַרוֹשׁ אֱלֹקִים”, כְּפִירוֹשׁ
רַשִׁי – ”לְשֹׂאֵל תְּלַמּוּד מִפִּי
הַגְּבוּרָה”, הֵינּוּ שְׁלִימוּדֵם מִפִּי
מֹשֶׁה הוּא כִּ”תְּלַמּוּד מִפִּי
הַגְּבוּרָה”].

זֹאת וְעוֹד: מֵאַחַר שְׁמִשָּׁה מְרוֹמֵם
אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמְקַרְבֵם לְדַרְגָתוֹ,
אֲזִי גַם קִבְּלָתָם אֶת הַתּוֹרָה מִמּוֹנּוֹ
תִּהְיֶה עַל־דֶּרֶךְ אוֹפֵן קִבְּלָתוֹ אוֹתָהּ
מִפִּי הַגְּבוּרָה.

וּבְלִשׁוֹן הַחֲסִידוֹת: דְּרַגַּת מֹשֶׁה
הִיא ”רְאִיָּה” – הוּא קִיבֵל אֶת
הַתּוֹרָה מִפִּי הַגְּבוּרָה בְּאוֹפֵן שֶׁל
רְאִיָּה. וְלָכֵן, בְּנוֹסֶף לְכַף שְׂאִיָּה

The rationale is that the concept of birth – bringing into being a new entity – that results from teaching Torah to the son of another person comes about because “the mouth of the Almighty” is invested in the Torah and that dimension existed primarily in relation to Moshe, who studied Torah “from the mouth of the Almighty.” See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 15, p. 180.

³¹ *Devarim* 5:5.

³² See *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 332a. See also *ibid.*, pp. 7a, 265a; *Shmos Rabbah* 3:15, *Vayikra Rabbah* 2:3; *Mechilta*, *Shmos* 18:19, et al.

³³ See *Rambam, Hilchos Chagigah* 3:6, which states that when the people would hear the king read the Torah at the *Hakhel* gathering, it was as if they heard it from G-d at Sinai.

³⁴ *Shmos* 18:15.

³⁵ See also *Mirkeves HaMishneh to the Mechilta, Shmos* 18:15. Note also our Sages’ statement (*Sanhedrin* 19a, cited by *Alshich, Shmos, loc. cit.*, “You are not standing before us, but before Him Who spoke and created the world.”

³⁶ See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 2d ff.

³⁷ Note our Sage’s statement (*Rashi, Mechilta, Shmos* 20:15) that, at the time of the Giving of the Torah, the entire Jewish people “saw the sounds,” i.e., they saw what was ordinarily heard. See page 275.

who witnessed it is entirely different from the way he responds when one who merely heard about the event describes it to him, as our Sages comment,³⁸ “Hearing cannot be compared to seeing.” However, the Jews would not merely hear from Moshe. Moshe would be able to affect the Jews and elevate them to the extent that they, too, would be able to receive the Torah from him³⁹ on the level of sight.⁴⁰

For this reason – so that the Jews could receive the Torah as conveyed to them by Moshe on a level of sight⁴¹ – it would have to be possible (and therefore, imperative) that only Moshe himself teach the Torah to the Jews and for him alone to judge them regarding all their disputes. Because they would have been elevated to a higher rung, teaching and judging them would not be that trying and it would still be possible that Moshe would “endure and this entire people [would] reach its destination intact.”

Seeing Beyond the Immediate Circumstances

6. On this basis, we can understand Yisro’s contribution. Yisro came from his land, Midian, and was a convert. He perceived the Jewish people not as they existed when Moshe elevated them to his own level, but as they existed on their own inherent level. Therefore, he argued that it was not possible for Moshe himself to judge the Jews.

With regard to Torah study, Yisro agreed that when the Jews came to learn “the statutes and

דומה קבלת דבר ממי שראהו בעצמו לקבלת דבר ממי שרק שמע אותו (כמאמר חז”ל “אינה דומה ראייה לשמיעה”) – הנה פעולת משה עי”ז שרומם את ישראל היא, שגם אופן הקבלה שלהם (ממשה) יהיה בדרגת ראייה.

וימהאי טעמא, כיון שבני ישראל מקבילים את השפעת התורה ממושה באופן של ראייה, רק משה עצמו יכול (וצריף) ללמוד תורה עם בני ישראל, ואף לשפוט אותם בעצמו בכל עניניהם, ואזי – “ויכלת עמד וגם כל העם הזה על מקומו יבא בשלום.”

1. וזה היה חידושו של יתרו:

יתרו הגיע מארצו, היה גר וכו', ועל כן הוא ראה את ישראל בהיותם (לא במצב זה, שמושה מרומם אותם לדרגתו, אלא) במצבם מצד עצמם; ולכן טען שענין משפטם של ישראל אינו יכול להיות ע”י משה עצמו:

בענין לימוד התורה – יש מקום לומר שע”ז גופא שבני ישראל

³⁸ See *Mechilta, Shmos 19:9*.

³⁹ See *Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 8:3*, which states regarding the prophecy of Moshe, “You saw with your own eyes” that G-d spoke through him.

⁴⁰ See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim, p. 3c*, which explains that Moshe’s level of “sight” resulted from the fact that his spiritual level was that of *yesod aba*, the attribute of *yesod* as it is included within *chochmah*. The generation that he led through the desert also shared a connection with that

spiritual level (see *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar, p. 31d* and the other sources mentioned in footnote 25).

⁴¹ To cite a parallel: *Mashiach* will be able to teach the Torah to the entire people even though there will be myriads upon myriads of people, since he will teach in a manner of sight (*Likkutei Torah, Vayikra, p. 17a-b*). That source explains that Moshe sought to enter *Eretz Yisrael* so that he could elevate the entire Jewish people to this level. See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim p. 3c*, and the second *maamar* entitled *Vayidaber Elokim, 5699*.

the laws..., the path they should follow, and the actions they should carry out,"⁴² Moshe should be the one to teach them. **It is appropriate to say that** the very fact that the people would come to learn **would affect them, elevating them to Moshe's level and empowering them to study on that rung. Therefore,** as Yisro suggested, **Moshe** should continue **"adjuring them regarding the statutes."**⁴²

However, when they come seeking judgment regarding their personal concerns, including settling "their disputes,"⁴³ they would not be functioning in the same "world" as Moshe. Accordingly, at that time, they would not be uplifted to the extent that they could accept and learn⁴⁴ the Torah's judgments as Moshe would.⁴⁵

There is ample room to dispute the perspective Yisro presented, because **when litigants would stand in Moshe's presence, that alone would lift them above being engrossed in their private concerns. Even a five-year-old beginning his Torah studies, i.e., a young child first introduced to Torah study, understands this. When he is in the same room as his teacher, his thoughts and conduct are different than when he is alone and involved with his own concerns.⁴⁶ Therefore, every Jew could have accepted the rulings Moshe delivered and studied⁴⁴ even the judgments of the Torah on Moshe's own level.**

Despite this, G-d accepted Yisro's suggestion. The reason: It was necessary to safeguard the

באים ללמוד "את החוקים ואת התורות גו' את הדרך ילכו בה ואת המעשה גו'", פועל הדבר את פעולתו, ואזי מתרוממים ישראל לדרגת משה ולומדים בדרגתו, ולכן – "וזההרתה (משה) אתהם את החוקים גו'".

אבל כפאשר באים אליו בני ישראל לדון על-דבר משפט בנוגע לעסקיהם, ואף ליישב את "דברי ריבותם", הרי באותה שעה אין הם ב"עולמו" של משה, וממילא אין ביכולתם בשעת מעשה להתרומם כדי לקבל וללמוד את משפט את התורה באופנו של משה.

אמנם המצב היה, שהתייצבות בעלי הדינים לפני משה רבינו – היא גופא רוממה אותם בשעת מעשה מהתלבשותם בתוך עסקיהם [כמובן אפילו ל"בן חמש למקרא", שפאשר הוא נמצא בחדר אחד עם המלמד שלו, הנהגתו שונה מאשר היא בשעה שהוא יושב לבדו ועסוק בעניניו], עד אשר היה ביכולתם לקבל וללמוד את משפט התורה באופן של דרגת משה;

אך בכל זאת הסכים הקב"ה לעצת יתרו, מפני שהיה צורך (גם)

⁴² *Shmos* 18:20. See the sources cited in footnote 28, above.

⁴³ See *Rashi, Shmos* 18:19.

⁴⁴ To refer to our Sages' statement cited in footnote 29 above, "From whom is it befitting to study the Torah?" Note the saying in *Berachos* 6a (cited by *Sifsei Kohen* in his commentary on the Torah in this *parshah*): "A judgment is also Torah" and causes "the Divine presence to be manifest."

⁴⁵ Similarly, when considering the level of the Torah itself, since judgment involves applying the Torah as it "descends" and involves itself in the matters of this world – in contrast to the Torah's inherent lofty level that transcends material existence – it is below Moshe's level and the rung of sight.

⁴⁶ Needless to say, an adult experiences such feelings when in the presence of a true Torah sage.

Jews' level of spiritual conduct even after they would enter Eretz Yisrael,⁴⁷ after the fulfillment of G-d's prophecy to Moshe,⁴⁸ "You will soon lie with your forefathers, and this nation will rise up and stray..." Then, even when they would not study the Torah under Moshe and be elevated by him, the Torah – which at all times is G-d's word – would be conveyed to them by "the heads of the thousands of Israel" in their generation.

This also explains why Moshe did not feel that it was necessary for him to take this step on his own. Firstly, the concept that a shepherd of Israel should change his own pattern of conduct to safeguard circumstances that might occur after his passing is a novelty. However, aside from that, it did not even enter Moshe's mind that there would be other circumstances, for had it not been for the sin committed afterwards,⁴⁹ Moshe would have led the Jews into Eretz Yisrael, initiating the Ultimate Redemption, after which there would be no exile.⁵⁰ At that time, the Jews would study the Torah on the level of sight.⁵¹

Moshe's Ongoing Influence

7. Nevertheless, G-d instructed Moshe to follow Yisro's advice because even the steps necessary to safeguard the Jews' spiritual standing after Moshe's passing had to be accomplished through Moshe. His responsibility was to convey the Torah in its totality, including even those

להבטיח את מצבם של בני ישראל לאחרי כניסתם לארץ ישראל, כאשר "הנה שוכב גו' וקם העם הזה גו'" – שאף שלא ילמדו תורה מפי משה ולא יתרוממו על-ידו, הנה גם באותה שעה תגיע אליהם התורה (שהיא דבר ה' בכל הזמנים) ע"י ראשי אלפי ישראל שבדור.

וזהו גם הטעם לכך שמשה לא סבר שעליו לעשות זאת בעצמו, שהרי [בנוסף לכך שענין זה – שרועה ישראל ישנה סדר הנהגתו כדי להבטיח את המצב שלאחרי הסתלקותו – דבר חידוש הוא; הנה באותה שעה עדיין לא עלה על הדעת מצב אחר, שהרי לולא החטא שלאחרי זה] משה היה צריך להכניס את בני ישראל לארץ ישראל, ואזי היתה זו גאולה שלימה שאין אחריה גלות, אשר בה לימודם של ישראל הוא בדרגת ראיה.

ז. אמנם, גם הפעולה לצורך ענין זה גופא צריכה להעשות ע"י משה רבינו, שהרי כל עניני התורה – אפילו הענינים הנוגעים לדורות הבאים – מוכרחים לבוא באמצעות משה, וכמאמר חז"ל

⁴⁷ At that time, the Jews would undergo a transition from the desert to a different pattern of life and begin conducting themselves as befits a settled land, following the mode indicated by *Vayikra* 25:3, "Six years shall you sow your field...."

⁴⁸ *Devarim* 31:16.

⁴⁹ The main text is referring to the sin of the spies, after which it was decreed that the Jews would not immediately enter Eretz Yisrael (*Bamidbar* 14:27–35).

⁵⁰ See the beginning of the Mittlerer Rebbe's *Shaarei Teshuvah*, part 2 (*Chinuch*); *Or HaTorah, Devarim*, Vol. 1, pp. 65, 93, and the sources cited there.

⁵¹ See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 3c, and the *maamarim* entitled *VaEschanan, Or HaTorah*, loc. cit., which explain that Moshe desired to lead the Jews into Eretz Yisrael so that he would endow them with the potential to see the spiritual. Since he was unable to achieve this, he told the generation who would enter Eretz Yisrael (*Devarim* 4:1): "Now, Israel, hear..." i.e., granting them only the rung of hearing the spiritual. It is possible to say that he began reciting the Book of *Devarim* at that time for this reason. As will be explained in footnote 53, that book reflects the manner in which the Torah was internalized in Moshe's own understanding.

matters that would be relevant only to the later generations, as alluded to by **the saying of our Sages:**⁵² **“Every novel Torah insight that an experienced scholar will reveal in the future was given to Moshe at Sinai.”** Even a novel insight that a scholar in a later generation will bring out as a result of his own labor was also given to Moshe at Sinai.

Since it is a novel Torah insight that the experienced scholar developed with his own intellectual labor, seemingly, it could never, on its own, become a part of the word of G-d, the **“Torah of Moshe.”** Only when Moshe serves as the medium for the scholar’s insight can it actually become **the word of G-d.**⁵³

This is the implication of Yisro’s advice to Moshe, “Ve’atah sechezeh – Select...,”⁵⁴ interpreted by *Rashi*⁵⁴ as referring to choosing with **“the spirit of holiness (*ruach hakodesh*) that is upon you.”** It was Moshe’s responsibility – with his spirit of holiness⁵⁵ – to select and appoint **“the heads of the thousands”** and the other lesser judges who would judge the people. In this manner, he would assure that over the entire course of history, the sages of Israel – who were ordained one by another in a chain extending back to Moshe and who would judge the Jewish people according to the

“כל מה שתלמיד ותיק עתיד לחידש בתורה הכל ניתן למשה מסיני” – כלומר: אפילו מה שתלמיד ותיק, בדור שלאחר זמן, מחדש – היינו שזהו חידושו של התלמיד הותיק, הנה אף זה “ניתן למשה מסיני”.

וטעם הדבר, שמאחר שתלמיד ותיק זה התייגע והמציא את החידוש בשכלו – לכן אין החידוש יכול להיות חלק מתורת משה אלא אם כן מגיע הדבר באמצעות משה, ואזי זהו דבר ה' ממש.

וזהו שאמר יתרו למשה רבינו “ואתה תחזה – ברוח הקודש שעליך”: על משה לבחור ולמנות, ברוח הקודש שלו, את “שרי האלפים וגו” אשר ישפטו את העם, ועי”ז מובטח לכל הדורות שמשפט ישראל ע”י חכמי ישראל (סמוכין איש מפי איש עד משה רבינו) ע”פ הפסקדין שהם מסיקים בשכלם – הרי הוא משפטה של תורת אמת (תורת משה).

⁵² See *Megillah* 19b; *Talmud Yerushalmi, Peah* 2:4; *Shmos Rabbah* 47:1; *Vayikra Rabbah* 22:1; *Koheles Rabbah* 1:9, 5:8; the responsa of Rav David HaKohen, responsa 5, sec. 3; *Toras HaOlah*, Vol. 3, ch. 55; the introduction to *Sifsei Kohen’s* commentary on the Torah; *Or Torah* of the Maggid, the beginning of *Parshas Toldos*; *Tanya, Kuntreis Acharon.*, the *maamar* entitled *Lehavin P’ratei Hahalachos*.

⁵³ See the lengthy explanations in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 4, p. 1087ff., and Vol. 19, p. 12ff., regarding the Book of *Devarim*. *Megillah* 31b states that Moshe recited the Book of *Devarim* on his own initiative. However, the intent is not, Heaven forbid, that Moshe authored it. Instead, the Torah, G-d’s word, en clothed itself in Moshe’s spirit of holiness. Thus, “the Divine presence spoke from Moshe’s throat” (see *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 232a). This began a motif that made it become possible for the Torah study of experienced scholars in every era to labor with their own understanding and reveal Torah concepts that are the actual “word of G-d.” Moshe’s initiative made it

possible for a person to become a conduit to communicate G-d’s truth. See also the explanation of the phrase (*Devarim* 5:19), “a great and never-ending voice,” in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 4, 1093ff.

⁵⁴ *Rashi* to the verse. See the two opinions in the *Mechilta* there whether the term “Select” refers to making choices based on “prophecy” or “the luminous looking glass,” a lesser degree of spiritual vision.

⁵⁵ In the original, the Rebbe highlights Moshe’s “spirit of holiness.” By doing so, he emphasizes that Moshe did not choose the judges based on his own thought process, but through “his spirit of holiness.”

Note that even the Book of *Devarim* that Moshe recited “on his own initiative” was communicated “with the spirit of holiness” (*Tosafos, Megillah, loc. cit., s.v., Moshe meatzmo*).

rulings that they would reach based on their own thinking processes – would be delivering the judgments of the Torah of Truth, the Torah of Moshe.

The Power of Sight

8. On this basis, we can understand the precision of the wording, *Ve'atah sechezeh* used by Yisro. The literal meaning of the term *sechezeh*, translated as “select,” is “see.” Yisro used the Aramaic term *Ve'atah sechezeh*⁵⁶ and not the Hebrew *Ve'atah sireh* (וְאַתָּה תִּרְאֶה).

Seeing connotes a lofty spiritual rung. **Were Moshe to look at the Jews with his spirit of holiness in a manner of *re'iah* (רְאִיָּה), seeing them with the full intensity of his potential, there would be no need for “heads of thousands” and the other lesser judges. Moshe could serve as the medium to deal with all the Jewish people’s concerns in an overt manner. He alone could judge the entire people concerning all their affairs, minor matters as well as major matters.**

To appoint other judges, it was necessary for **Moshe to undergo a descent from his level (in a manner similar to the above description of him being weakened “like a female”).**⁵⁷ To connote this, **instead of a form of the Hebrew term *re'iah*, Yisro used the Aramaic term *sechezeh* – a term from the popular vernacular.**⁵⁸ This indicates that **Moshe’s level of sight underwent a transition and a descent into a worldly language.**⁵⁹ To explain using the terminology of *Chassidus*,⁶⁰ *sechezeh* is the hind dimension,

ח. וּבְזֶה יוֹבֵן גַּם הַדִּיּוּק – וְאַתָּה תַּחְזֶה (ולא “וְאַתָּה תִּרְאֶה”):

בְּאֵם יְבִיט מֹשֶׁה בְּרוּחַ קִדְשׁוֹ בְּאוֹפֵן שֶׁל רְאִיָּה – דְּרַגַּת מֹשֶׁה בְּמִילּוּאָה וּבִתְקַפָּה – לֹא יִהְיֶה צוֹרֵךְ לְהַזְקֵק לְ“שְׂרֵי אֲלָפִים וּגו’”.

בְּמַצֵּב זֶה נַעֲשִׂים כָּל הָעֲנִינִים בְּאִמְצָעוֹת מֹשֶׁה בְּאוֹפֵן גָּלוּי, וְהוּא עֲצָמוֹ שׁוֹפֵט אֶת הַכֹּל, אֶת כָּל הָעַם וּבְכָל עֲנִינֵיהֶם (הוּן “דְּבַר הַגְּדוֹל” וְהוּן “דְּבַר הַקָּטָן”);

וְדוּקָא עִי”ז שִׁישְׁנָה אֲצֵל מֹשֶׁה יְרִידָה מִמְדְּרִיגָתוֹ (עַל-דֶּרֶךְ “הַתְּשַׁתֵּם אֶת כּוֹחִי,” כִּנ”ל ס”ד) – הֵינְנוּ, שְׁתַּמּוּרַת הָרְאִיָּה יֵשׁ לוֹ רַק (בְּחִינַת “תַּחְזֶה,” שְׁהִיא) הַתַּרְגּוּם שֶׁל רְאִיָּה, כְּלוּמַר, זֶהוּ עֲנֵן הָרְאִיָּה (דְּרַגַּת מֹשֶׁה) כְּפִי שֶׁהוּא “מְתוּרְגָּם” (וְנִמְשָׁף) לְלִשׁוֹן תַּרְגּוּם (לְשׁוֹן אֲרָמִי, הַשְּׂיִף לְעוֹלָם), וּבְלִשׁוֹן הַחֲסִידוּת: “אֲחוּרִיִּים שֶׁל בְּחִינַת רְאִיָּה” – אֲזִי רוֹאֶה הוּא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּפִי שֶׁהֵם מְצַד עֲצָמָם,

⁵⁶ As to be explained below, Hebrew, *Lashon HaKodesh*, is considered the pure tongue and Aramaic as the popular, but inferior, derivative spoken by people at large. Thus, the texts of Kabbalah see *Lashon HaKodesh* as describing a situation in its pure, refined state and Aramaic as conveying it in a manner that has been adapted to the limitations of the world at large.

⁵⁷ See page 259 above.

⁵⁸ See *Torah Or*, p. 78c, *Likkutei Torah, Devarim*, p. 7a, *Shaar HaEmunah*, ch. 25, et al., which contrast the two terms. See also *Zohar*, Vol. I, *Sisrei Torah*, p. 88b.

⁵⁹ *Torah Or*, pp. 77d ff., 78c.

⁶⁰ *Likkutei Torah*, loc. cit. Similar explanations are found in *Torah Or* and *Shaar HaEmunah*, loc. cit.

the back,⁶¹ of *re'iah*.⁶² When Moshe viewed the Jews in this manner, **he saw them as they inherently were.** On that level, **it was necessary to select “heads of thousands...”** to judge them.⁶³

For this reason, this Torah reading is called Yisro since “he added a passage to the Torah.” When looking from **Moshe’s level, a different and higher pattern** of conduct was called for.⁶⁴ **Moreover, the Torah’s own inherent perspective, i.e., the revelation of G-d’s wisdom (that was made known by Moshe),** also called for such a **different pattern.** However, **Yisro brought about a new breakthrough, an addition to the Torah,** enabling the Torah to relate to people as they exist within a materially-oriented mindset. This enabled **also the pattern of conduct implied by *Ve’atah sechezeh* to become a Torah mode of conduct.**⁶⁵

וּמִמֵּילָא יִשְׁנו צוֹרֵךְ בְּעֵינָיו זֶה שֶׁל בְּחִירַת “שָׂרֵי אֲלָפִים וּגו’”.

וּלְפִיכֹךְ נִקְרְאת הַפְּרָשָׁה עַל שֵׁם יִתְרוֹ, “עַל שֵׁם שְׂיִתֵּר פְּרָשָׁה אַחַת בַּתּוֹרָה,” כִּי מִצַּד דְּרָגַת מִשְׁפָּה הַסֹּדֵר הוּא בְּאוֹפֵן אַחֵר; וַיִּתְיַר מִזֶּה – בַּתּוֹרָה מִצַּד עֲצָמָה, שֶׁהִיא גִילּוּי חֻכְמַתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ (הַמְתַּגַּלָּה ע”י מִשְׁפָּה), הַסֹּדֵר הוּא בְּאוֹפֵן אַחֵר; אֲבָל יִתְרוֹ גָּרַם לִיְתָרוֹן בַּתּוֹרָה, שֶׁגַּם סֹדֵר הַהִנְהָגָה שֶׁל “וְאַתָּה תִּחְזָה” – נַעֲשֶׂה סֹדֵר הַנְּהָגָה ע”פ תּוֹרָה.

⁶¹ To explain the simile: A person’s countenance expresses his vitality and inner feelings. Looking at his face tells you who he is. By contrast, his back – though functional – reveals nothing of his inner self. By saying Aramaic is the hind dimension, the back, of *Lashon HaKodesh*, *Chassidus* is implying that the concept is being perceived or presented in a manner which reveals its external form, but not its inner energy. This is reflected by the fact that the Hebrew word *panim* means both “face” and “inner dimension.”

⁶² Clarification is required regarding the comments of *Zayis Ra’anan* to *Yalkut Shimoni* (sec. 270) where the words of the Sage who interprets *Ve’atah sechezeh* as referring to “the luminous looking glass” which is interpreted as meaning “prophecy via a luminous looking glass,” i.e., a lofty level of spiritual perception. Nevertheless, questions regarding this interpretation have already been raised by the gloss *Mirkeves HaMishneh* to the *Mechilta*, and others.

⁶³ On this basis, it is possible to explain why in *Devarim* 1:9ff., Moshe refers to the appointment of judges as his own innovation, without acknowledging Yisro (see Abarbanel, *Parshas Yisro*, et al.). As mentioned, Moshe delivered the Book of *Devarim* on his own initiative, i.e., as the Torah became enfolded within his own *ruach hakodesh*, i.e., as a mortal understands it, and not as it emanates “from the mouth of the Almighty” in a revealed manner. On this level of understanding, Moshe himself felt the need for the appointment of judges.

⁶⁴ The statement in the main text receives even greater relevance based on the principle (*Etz Chayim*, *shaar* 4, ch. 3, *shaar* 34, ch. 3, *shaar* 35, ch. 1; *Tanya*, *Iggeres HaKodesh*, the explanation to Epistle 27) that the “holiness” endowed by a *tzaddik* “never departs from its place.” Accordingly, even at present, the standpoint of Moshe is an active

spiritual potential. Accordingly, the need exists for the Jews to function spiritually on the level of “sight,” direct perception, rather than *sechezeh*, the lower, more worldly rung.

⁶⁵ Since this mode of conduct is part of the Torah, it is understood that it was also given to Moshe at Sinai, as stated in the *Sifri* (see footnote 15) that it “had already been [given to] Moshe.”

The resolution of the latter statement with the statements in the main text that Yisro contributed a new dimension to the Torah can be understood based on the explanations in *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 19, p. 387, footnote 54, of our Sages’ saying, “Every novel Torah insight that an experienced scholar will reveal in the future was [already] given to Moshe at Sinai.” The implication of that statement is that the scholar’s insight is indeed, a novelty, a new concept. True, it was given to Moshe at Sinai. However, at the Giving of the Torah, the Torah was given as it is sourced in “the essential concealment of the *Ein Sof*,” a rung above the Torah as it is drawn down and revealed, i.e., a darkness that is higher than light.

On this basis, the wording used in *Sifri*, *nisaleim mei’einei Moshe*, translated above as “it became obscured from Moshe’s eyes,” can be interpreted as meaning, this teaching was given to Moshe as it was concealed, i.e., on a level loftier than the Torah that was revealed to Moshe.

This is similar to the explanation *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 19, p. 252ff., gives regarding the saying, “Every novel Torah insight that an experienced scholar will reveal in the future was given to Moshe at Sinai”: that Moshe was given the general principle (the *klall*) from which, and on which basis, the experienced scholar reveals a particular element (the *p’rat*), i.e., his novel insight. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 19, p. 252ff.

An Ascent, not a Descent

9. From the above, it would appear that the mode of conduct mandated by *Ve'atah sechezeh* solely involves a descent, G-d forbid. It is merely a necessary step to safeguard the Jews who needed an intermediary between themselves and Moshe, just as the Jewish people as a whole needed Moshe to serve as an intermediary between themselves and G-d.

Nevertheless, from an inner perspective, the opposite is true. It is specifically by safeguarding and elevating Jews on the lowest levels that one taps the loftiest spiritual potentials.⁶⁶

To cite a parallel, as my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, explains at length in the series of *maamarim* entitled *Basi Legani*,⁶⁷ first published for the day of his passing,⁶⁸ it is specifically for the sake of man's Divine service on this material plane, where an immense battle with the body and the animal soul is required, that the most precious treasures – even treasures so dear that they were withheld from the eyes of the public before the war – are put to use, and even “squandered.” The fundamental intent in “squandering” these treasures is to provide resources – not only to the commanders – but also primarily to the “foot-soldiers” who actually wage the war.

It is through such efforts that G-d's intent – the desire for a dwelling place in the lowest realms,⁶⁹ i.e., this material realm below which there is none⁶⁸ – is carried out. This intent will blossom into consummate revelation with the

ט. אָמַנְם, לְכַאוֹרָה עַפ"ז נִמְצָא, שְׁהַסְדֵּר שֶׁל "וְאַתָּה תַחֲזֶה" הוּא עֵינֵן שֶׁל יְרִידָה בְּלִבָּד, ח"ו – לְצוּרָה אֵלּוּ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל הַזְּקוּקִים לְמִמוּצָע בֵּינָם וּבֵין מֹשֶׁה (כְּשֶׁם שֶׁהָיוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל זְקוּקִים לְמֹשֶׁה כְּמִמוּצָע בֵּינָם וּבֵין "פִּי הַגְּבוּרָה");

אָף בְּפִנְיֵימִיּוֹת הָעֵינֵינִים – הִנֵּה אֲדַרְבֶּה: דְּוָקָא ע"י הַהֲתַעֲסָקוֹת לְסִייעַ וּלְרוּמָם יְהוּדֵי הַנִּמְצָא לְמִטָּה מְטָה בְּיוֹתֵר, נִיתֵן "לְתַפּוֹס" וּלְהַמְשִׁיךְ מִן הַגְּבוּהָ גְבוּהָ בְּיוֹתֵר,

[עַל-דֶּרֶךְ מָה שְׁמֵאָרִיף כ"ק מוֹרֵי וְחֲמֵי אֲדָמו"ר לְבָאָר בְּמֵאָמְרֵי הַהִילּוּלָא שְׁלוֹ, שְׁדוּקָא עֵבוֹר הָעֵבוּדָה בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הַתַּחֲתוֹן, שְׁבוּ יֵשׁ צוּרָה בְּמִלְחָמָה עֲצוּמָה בְּגוֹף וּבְנַפֶּשׁ הַבְּהֵמִיּוֹת, מְבַזְבְּזִים מְלִמְעָלָה אֶת הָאוֹצְרוֹת הַכֵּי יְקָרִים (שְׁעַד עֵת הַמְּלַחְמָה אֲפִילוּ לֹא נִיתְּנוּ לְרֵאוֹתָם), וְעִיקָר הַמְּכֻוֹן בְּבִזְבוּז הָאוֹצְרוֹת הוּא שְׁיִגְיעוּ (לֹא רַק לְפִקְדֵי הַחֵיל, אֲלָא) לִידֵיהֶם שֶׁל אַנְשֵׁי הַחֵיל, הַמְּבַצְעִים אֶת הַמְּלַחְמָה בְּפוֹעַל];

וְעִי"ז נִשְׁלָמֵת הַפְּוֹנָה הָעֲלִיּוֹנָה ד'נִתְּאוּהוּ הַקַּב"ה לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ דִּירָה בְּתַחֲתוֹנִים, בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה הַתַּחֲתוֹן, שְׁאֵין תַּחֲתוֹן לְמִטָּה מְמוֹנָה, וְדָבָר זֶה

⁶⁶ The *maamar* entitled *Yavi'u Levush Malchus*, sec. 12ff. and sec. 33ff. in *Shaarei Orah*, et al.

⁶⁷ See sections 11 and 20 in that series of *maamarim*.

⁶⁸ The Rebbe Rayatz passed on 10 Shvat, 5710. 10 Shvat is also the *yahrzeit* (anniversary of the passing) of his grandmother,

Rebbetzin Rivkah. In 5710, the Rebbe Rayatz prepared a *maamar*, *Basi Legani*, to be studied on that date. After the Rebbe Rayatz passed away on that day, the Rebbe saw that *maamar* as his spiritual “last will and testament” for the coming generation.

⁶⁹ *Tanya*, ch. 36. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. 6, p. 197ff.

coming of *Mashiach*; may it take place in the immediate future.

יְהִי בְּשָׁלִימוֹת וּבְגָלוּי בְּבִיאַת
מְשִׁיחַ צְדָקָנוּ, בְּקֶרֶב מְמוֹשׁ.

(מְשִׁיחַת ט"ו בְּשַׁבָּט תשל"ה,
לְקוּטֵי שִׁחוֹת חֶלֶק טז, יְתָרוֹ ב,
בְּתַרְגוּם לְלִשׁוֹן הַקּוּדֶשׁ)