

SICHA SYNOPSIS

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Yisro, Sicha 1

We read in this week's Torah portion, *Yitro*, that when the Jewish people received the Torah from G-d, Moses taught it first to the women and then to the men. The Torah states, "So you shall say to the House of Jacob [the women] and tell the Children of Israel [the men]."

Why did the women precede the men in the giving of the Torah?

Our Sages tell us that Moses taught the general principles of the Torah to the Jewish women, after which he learned the minutiae of its laws with the Jewish men. The general principles came first, after which the details and particulars of the Torah's many laws followed.

In fact, this is the prevailing order when it comes to Torah: first come the generalities, then the particulars.

To give an example:

The Jewish people heard the first two of the Ten Commandments directly from G-d--"I am the L-rd your G-d" and "You shall have no other gods"--after which they heard the rest of the Ten Commandments, which were given over by Moses.

Another example: G-d gave the Jews the Ten Commandments--the general principles of the Torah--then He gave them the remainder of the Torah's 613 *mitzvot*.

Similarly, Moses first taught the general principles of the Torah to the women, after which he went into the details of the laws with the men.

But why were the Torah's principles taught specifically to the Jewish women?

Faith in G-d and fear of G-d are the "general principles" of the Torah, as it states, "And G-d commanded us to keep all these statutes [in order] to fear G-d." In other words, the totality of Torah and *mitzvot* is merely a corollary of faith in G-d and awe of Him.

Believing in G-d and fearing Him are the foundations of the entire Torah. Women are particularly distinguished in these two qualities; their faith is much more apparent and expressed more openly than it is by men. Jewish women observe *mitzvot* with simple faith and with a pure and perfect fear of heaven.

Indeed, it is for this reason that the Jewish women merited to receive the general principles and foundations of Torah ahead of the men.

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It was in the merit of the righteous women of that generation that the Jewish people were taken out of Egypt and received the Torah. So too is it in our times: In the merit of our righteous women we will go out of our present exile, and be worthy of learning Torah directly from Moshiach.
