



Rabbi Silvers'

Shabbat Message



Good Shabbes...

In this week's Torah portion of Yitro, we learn about Moses' father-in-law, a Midianite priest, who is able to fully rejoice in the good fortunes of the Israelite people. "Yitro was **vayichad** - **happy** about all the good that the Lord had done for Israel, that God had rescued them from the hands of the Egyptians."

Rashi picks up on the strange choice of the Hebrew word *vayichad* for "happy" in the verse. Yitro's joy here is understood to be genuine and profound. His devotion to Israel is unquestioned. But the Hebrew root contains a hint of something else going on at the same time – something else that Yitro is experiencing alongside this devotion and joy. *Vayichad* shares its Hebrew root with the word *l'chaded*, "to sharpen", or *chidudin*, meaning "pointed." Rashi, citing an earlier midrash, suggests that the reason this unusual word is used here is because Yitro's skin got "pointy" – *chidudin*, *chidudin*. In other words, he got goosebumps.

Why did he get goosebumps? Because, according to the midrash, as he listened to Moses' account of what had happened, he couldn't help but also feel compassion for the Egyptians who were killed in the process of Israel's liberation. Yitro's goosebumps are understood by the midrash not as a failure, but as an indication of his generous heart. For his name, Yitro, comes from the Hebrew root *yoter* – meaning abundance or more-than-enoughness. Yitro embodies a quality of generousness. He has more than enough room in his heart for both Israelite and Egyptian, joy and sorrow, devotion and compassion.

On this Shabbat, in the Torah portion of Yitro we learn how Moses received the gift of Torah and the Ten Commandments from God at Sinai. Just as we rejoice in that gift to our people and our world, so too are we filled with joy that our synagogue has received a gift of Torah – new *chumashim* (Torah Books) donated by the Landau family that we dedicate at our 6:30 Shabbat service tonight. We should all indeed have goosebumps inspired by the generousness of the Landaus.

On this Shabbat, even in our joy, I ask you to consider the sorrow and difficulty of Federal employees who have been without pay for over the past month. Many are seeking food from local food-banks, and it is true in our community as well. The Jacobson Family Food Pantry is open and providing these families with food. And they are in desperate need to replenish their stock. Please, I ask you to have compassion for these individuals who find themselves in a situation not of their own making. Like Yitro, I ask you all to be generous of heart and bring non-perishable foods to services tonight and to the synagogue this entire week (and perhaps longer as the shutdown continues) so that we might do our part to help.

Bless you all!

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Bob Silvers



congregation
B'nai Israel

