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Written by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

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On the Parsha

This week's Parsha is named after Yisro. How did Yisro merit to have a Parsha named after him?

Rabbi Moshe Pivovitz ZT"l was one of the Alter Mirrers (senior members of the Mir Yeshiva) and one of the greatest students of Rav Yechezkel Levenstein ZT"l the Mashgiach of the Mir Yeshiva in Shanghai, China. He served as a Rav in the lower east side of Manhattan and was the Mashgiach of the Chasan Sofer Yeshiva in Brooklyn.

Rav Pivovitz writes of Yisro's initial encounter with his future son-in-law Moshe. Moshe had arrived in Midyan after he had run away from Pharoah for killing the Egyptian who was unjustly abusing a Jew. Before he had a chance to flee, Moshe was taken to Pharoah and was sentenced to death. Were it not for the miracle of Moshe's neck turning to marble when it was struck by the executioner's sword, Moshe would have died. We see that Moshe getting involved in the affair of another to remedy an injustice (killing the Egyptian to save the Jew) didn't really turn out well for Moshe. He was almost killed and had to flee Egypt.

Rav Pivovitz explains that one would think that after that experience, Moshe may have been justified in being more hesitant to become involved in the affairs of another to correct an injustice. However, when Moshe flees Egypt to Midyan, he encounters another injustice and does not hesitate to get involved. Shepherds drove away the daughters of Yisro who were trying to draw water for their father's flock. Moshe sees this injustice and immediately stands up for them.

Yisro takes note of this quality of Moshe – an Ish Emes (a man of truth) who stands up for justice, no matter the consequences. Similarly, when Yisro, who was a priest of other faiths, perceived their falsehood, he stepped down from the high office that he held because it was not the truth. He paid for the strength of his convictions – so much so,

that people did not want to deal with Yisro. He became a pariah and that is why his daughters were tending to his sheep. He could not find a shepherd who was willing to work for him.

Now, in this week's Parsha, he perceives the truth of Torah and Moshe's leadership. He wants to meet with Moshe. In his humility, he sends a message to Moshe telling him that if he is unworthy of meeting with him, then Moshe should meet with him for the sake of his wife, Tziporah. Moshe of course, welcomes him with honor and open arms. And yet, within a very short period of time, the humble Yisro sees injustice. The way Moshe Rabbeinu is managing the affairs of the people is inefficient. Every dispute that Bnei Yisrael had was coming to Moshe for adjudication. This caused a backlog and resulted in members of Bnei Yisrael, " ...to stand about you from morning until evening" waiting for their turn to have their cases heard. Yisro recognized this as an injustice as it was a subtle compromise of the honor and dignity of the Bnei Yisrael. Setting his humility aside, he comes before the leader and redeemer of the nation of Israel and criticizes Moshe without worrying about the repercussions.

"Come and see," says Rav Pivovitz. "A person who is ready to forego truth and remains silent to one who is conducting himself improperly only because he is afraid of him and thinks, 'This person was nice to me yesterday, how can I criticize him now?' is wrong and he must know that one is forbidden to forego the truth [and therefore, should advise him of his impropriety]. Difficult as this may be, [if he is fearful and does not do this] it is a sign that he does not truly value Emes."

When Yisro asked to meet with Moshe, Moshe welcomed him with open arms. Further, Moshe was the undisputed leader and redeemer of Bnei Yisrael and criticizing him could have come with dire consequences. Yisro could have been fearful and said to himself, "Moshe is the leader of the Bnei

Yisrael and he has been so gracious and welcoming to me, I have no right to criticize him. I will look the other way.”

However, he set those concerns and fears aside because he was an Ish Emes. Because he valued Emes, he merited to have this week’s Parsha named after him.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Not only is it important to always be honest, but quite often, even when we think that providing the unvarnished truth may work against us, it’s that very honesty that often wins the day. A shul Rav who was devoted to getting Jewish children out of public schools and into Jewish schools, once attempted the difficult task of convincing a Bais Yaakov to accept a young Israeli girl who was enrolled in a public school. The school principal (Menahel) told the Rav, “I am sorry, but it is impossible. Her background in Judaic studies is just too weak. She will not have the knowledge or skills to keep up. We cannot accept her.”

The shul Rav responded honestly, “Actually, that is NOT the reason that you would not want to accept her. She is very, very bright and she is fully fluent in Hebrew because both of her parents are from Israel. She can read and write Hebrew quite easily and will very quickly be one of the top students in her grade. She will have a problem with Rashi letters, but I imagine that, with her level of intellect, she can master Rashi script in less than a week.

Let me tell you, however, the real reason that you will not wish to accept her. Her father is well-nigh impossible to deal with. He is an absolute control freak and will try to dictate to you how you should treat his daughter and how you should run your school.”

Since the Rav was so honest and forthcoming regarding the reason why he believed there may be difficulty if the girl was accepted, he started to gain the Menahel’s trust and the Menahel began to believe him when he said that the girl could keep up with her classmates. He still had his doubts

though and reiterated his concerns to the Rav. The Rav responded that he was so sure that she would be able to keep up with the class that he agreed to pay \$3000 in tutoring fees if she would need it, but that it would quickly become evident that tutoring would not be necessary. However, the Rav continued, “Are you sure that you will be able to handle her father?” The Rav answered affirmatively.

The young lady was accepted to the Bais Yaakov and performed incredibly well, just as the Rav had predicted. She married a Ben Torah, had a number of children and became a remarkable mother and member of Klal Yisrael.

Halacha – Jewish Law

Question: May a journalist use a

fake name?

Answer: Rav Yaakov Moshe Hillel’s Bais Horaah has ruled that technically, using nom deplumes is not a violation of Emes (Bais Hora’ah Ahavas Shalom OC Shailah 451), however, it is not recommended because the Pasuk says, “Midvar Sheker Tirchak” stay far away from a matter that is false, and using a fake name may not be putting “enough distance” between you and falsehood.

Some Poskim (Halachic authorities) are more lenient if the fake name alludes to the actual person in a truthful manner such as “Ben Parentname” or “Avi Childname.” In these cases, the fake name is not entirely false.

Rav Yaakov Chizkiyahu Fish in his Titein Emes L’Yakov (5:21) quotes a ruling he received from the author of Kinyan Torah (Rav Avrohom Dovid Horvitz) that although sometimes there may be leniency in saying a falsehood to ensure that a correct Halacha be followed, here, regarding a journalist writing in a newspaper, there is absolutely no leniency whatsoever. Rav Horvitz recommends not signing any name at all or alternatively, one may write, “Name Withheld Upon Request.”