

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# בשבת



PARSHAS  
SHEMOS

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS  
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

## FROM SUPPER TO SANHEDRIN

**P**arshas Shemos introduces us to a slew of Jewish greats — *Moshe Rabbeinu*, *Aharon HaKohein*, *Yocheved*, *Miriam*, and so on. Amongst these, *Yisro* stands out, as he was not originally part of the Jewish nation, but joined later, after the Torah was given at *Har Sinai*. In fact, *Yisro's* descendants merited to sit amongst the *Sanhedrin* many years later, teaching Torah to the masses.<sup>1</sup>

What did *Yisro* do that caused such wonderful things for his descendants? The Gemara explained that he did something quite simple — he offered *Moshe Rabbeinu* a meal.

*Moshe* had become a fugitive, after his defense of a fellow Jew from the oppressions of an Egyptian taskmaster. Running for his very life, *Moshe* wound up at a well in *Midyan*, where he met the daughters of *Yisro* who were shepherding *Yisro's* sheep. Again *Moshe* saw the need to defend the weak, and protected *Yisro's* daughters from the aggression of the other shepherds.<sup>2</sup>

When his daughters returned home, *Yisro* expressed his surprise that they were home early. After being informed that *Moshe* had saved them, *Yisro* instructed his daughters to find *Moshe* and invite him over for dinner, out of gratitude for what he had done. Thus, concludes the Gemara, *Yisro's* reward was that his progeny became Torah giants.

R'Yaakov Moshe Lessin<sup>3</sup> (1889–1975) highlights the fact that *Yisro* did not seem to act any differently than most of us would in that situation. He was thankful for the kindness *Moshe* had shown his children, and offered him something to show his gratitude. There doesn't seem to be anything extraordinary to what *Yisro* had done. Why, then, is his reward so great?

R' Lessin explains that every act of *avodas Hashem*, big or small, has an effect on the one who did the act. Amongst other things, this spiritual influence causes one to want to continue doing *mitzvos*. Thus, *Yisro's* simple act of inviting in a guest multiplied and escalated, not just affecting him and his decision to join *Klal Yisrael*, but even affecting his great-grandchildren, and their *avodas Hashem*.

When we realize the impact of even the simple and easy *mitzvos*, we will be that much more determined in our performance of them.

1 *Sanhedrin* 104a, *Rashi ibid.* s.v. המה הקינים

2 *Shemos* 2:11-20

3 *Orech L'Chaim*, מצוה גוררת מצוה

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It's a constant battle — instant gratification vs. the knowledge that we will be better off doing *mitzvos*. Unfortunately, our baser nature often gets the better of us, as it may be too difficult to resist the lure of the instantaneous. What can we do to combat this common challenge?

Knowing how our nature works is perhaps the most important piece of strategic information needed in the battle for *avodas Hashem*.

When one chooses, despite the difficulties, to do a *mitzvah*, or to refrain from an *aveirah*, they are instantly changing themselves. They become more likely to follow that path again, and avoid pitfalls.<sup>1</sup>

This knowledge can be invaluable in our battles. When in the midst of a struggle, we tend to exaggerate the hardship, thinking that our current state will be our permanent state.

However, our own experiences show us this is not the case. By pushing ourselves to do *mitzvos* and to avoid *aveiros*, we become closer to Hashem, making it that much easier the next time around.

1 *Sefer HaChinuch*, *Mitzvah* 387

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**One can only recognize himself honestly through the study of Mussar; for the quintessence of Mussar is to journey into the depths of one's soul.**

- R' Chatzkel Levenstein zt"l, letter to R' Elyakim Schlezinger, 1969. *Sefer Mussarei Kletzky*, pg. 548

# THE RIGHT MAN FOR THE JOB

I\* was nearing my last year in *yeshiva*, and was working on getting *semicha*. Though I enjoyed *yeshiva*, my family was growing, and it was time for me to find a livelihood. I always wanted to be a *rebbe*, and to that end, I was sending my resume out to various *yeshivos*, both in-town and out-of-town. Little did I know my life would take a twist that I live with to this day.

A couple of years before, I was asked to volunteer for a local *bikur cholim* organization. They did everything, from bringing meals to hospitals to referrals to answering complicated *halachic* questions.

They had funding, but they lacked manpower. And so, they asked me and some friends to help out.

Though we only helped out for a couple of hours a week, I quickly realized two things — that the organization, though well meaning, was not well run, and that I had a special knack for this sort of thing. In a few short months, I had my hand in three different departments; I slowly grew to know the workings of the hospital system, insurance companies and even the difficult and complex *halachos* that can arise within the healthcare system.

After just a couple of years, I had become quite experienced, and though still working a few hours, I was essentially running the entire operation. But all that was about to end, as I sought my career as a *rebbe*. I called the founder of the organization to inform him that I would soon be leaving. He refused to accept my resignation, and added that he would be more than willing to give me a full-time salary. I was not tempted, and truly wanted to follow my calling. After some discussion, I agreed to ask a *rav* what to do.

As luck would have it, I was driving a well known *Rosh Yeshiva* to a wedding. I brought up my current situation, and asked his advice. “Of course you have no obligation to stay here. But it wouldn’t be the right thing to leave them without any help. Try to find someone who has your skills who can replace you.”

That was forty years ago. I still have not found that person, and I’m starting to think that I just might not ever find them. However, in the meantime, I took the organization to another level. We are now internationally recognized, fielding calls from Israel to Australia.

Additionally, I’ve become very knowledgeable in medical *halacha*, and many great *poskim* send their *sheilos* to me. I was very flattered when a great Torah giant called me to ask me a few questions before he gave a *shiur* addressing these topics.

There’s always more to do, but I’m so grateful for where I am. And to think, it all started with saying yes to help out with *bikur cholim*.

*\*Based on a true story.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Not only is one inspired to continue to do *mitzvos* after doing one, but restraining oneself from an *aveirah* also inspires one to continue to do so.<sup>1</sup>
- When one works to understand an area in Torah, Hashem rewards the person by helping them understand other areas of Torah.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 387*

<sup>2</sup> *Ben Yehoyadah on Pesachim 22b, s.v. כָּשָׁם שֶׁקִּבְּלָתִי*

[info@ohr-yisrael.com](mailto:info@ohr-yisrael.com)

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