

Yisro heard. (18:1)

The name of a *Parsha* is not arbitrary. It has been chosen by design, for a reason, for a purpose, to teach a lesson. This brings us to the name of our *parsha*: Yisro. Unquestionably, Yisro was an extraordinary human being: father-in-law of both Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Elazar ben Aharon *HaKohen Gadol* and the grandfather of Pinchas, who is Eliyahu *HaNavi*, but do their relationships warrant that a *parsha* be named after him? It is not as if we have a *parsha* named for the Patriarchs, Yosef *HaTzaddik* or Aharon *HaKohen*. Veritably, our *parsha* is about *Mattan Torah*, the Giving of the Torah. Yisro is a prelude to the Torah, because a lesson about Torah learning can be derived from Yisro.

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, explains that Yisro taught us two essential prerequisites to Torah study. First, *Vayishma* Yisro, “Yisro heard.” Did not everyone hear of the amazing miracles and wonders that Hashem wrought for His People? They heard – with their ears – not with their hearts. When Hashem told Shlomo *Hamelech* that He would grant him a wish, Shlomo asked for a *lev shomea*, “a heart that hears” (*Melachim I* 3:9). One who hears solely with his ears, hears superficially, as in “going in one ear and out the other.” If what we hear does not enter into our hearts, if we do not integrate what we hear into our being, then what we heard did not achieve its intended effect. Listening is insufficient. We must review, scrutinize and absorb what we have heard. Otherwise, it will soon dissipate.

Second, when Yisro heard, he immediately altered his lifestyle by picking himself up, packing everything, and leaving his home in search of the Jewish People. Only someone who truly seeks the truth, has the mettle to leave everything behind, his entire past, in pursuit of his goal. Yisro sought the truth. He searched through every religion, every dogma, and realized that the only truth was Judaism. It was this drive for the truth, this passion for spiritual integrity, coupled with a critical assessment of his discovery, that catapulted him to join *Klal Yisrael*. Had he been someone who listened without heart, accepted the superficial without truly assessing the veracity of its dogma, Yisro would have remained an idol worshipper in Midyan.

Thus, the Torah places Yisro’s story as a prelude to *Mattan Torah* for us to deduce that these two traits are critical to Torah acceptance. In order to receive the Torah, one must hear with his heart. And an astute, thinking person who is truly in pursuit of the truth will undoubtedly arrive at the truth. Those who do not seem to “find it” are not really looking – or listening.