

"And Moshe sent away his father-in-law, and he (Yisro) went his way to his own land." (18:27)

Rashi states that Yisro returned home solely in order to convert the remainder of his family to Judaism. The *Maharal* interprets the words "And Moshe sent" to imply that Moshe gave his blessings to this return. *Horav A.H. Lebovitz, Shlita*, poignantly extols the supreme sacrifice that Yisro made by leaving *Bnei Yisrael* and returning to Midyan. *Bnei Yisrael* had been privy to a unique miraculous existence. Sustained by *manna*, protected by the Clouds of Glory and a Pillar of Fire, *Bnei Yisrael* had experienced the most intense spiritual moments of all time. Under the tutelage of the greatest teacher, Moshe *Rabbeinu*, they shared the consummate environment for unparalleled spiritual growth.

It would have required a formidable reason for Yisro to withdraw from this idyllic environment in order to return to heathen surroundings, antithetical to *Torah* world view. Moshe felt it worthwhile that Yisro leave at this time, so that he would return and inspire his countrymen.

Horav Lebovitz states that we can certainly learn from Yisro regarding our responsibility to reach out to our alienated brethren. If Yisro was willing to perform this task, how much more so are we obligated to reach out to our fellow Jews even when it forces us to make personal sacrifices. The spiritual and physical welfare of our brethren is a responsibility which we must shoulder with love, devotion, and pride.

Horav Moshe Feinstein, z.l., provides specific guidelines for those whose overwhelming concern for their fellow Jew draws them into the field of *kiruv*, reaching out. Although he perceives *kiruv* to be a great *mitzvah*, he states that one must first strengthen his own commitment to *Torah*. The focus of one's concentration during the formative years in *yeshivah* should be self-improvement. During one's youth, *Torah* study should be his all-encompassing occupation. An inner striving towards greatness in *Torah* will effect positive results. One can assume responsibility for others only after he has developed his own potential in *Torah* learning.

This sequence is reflected in our daily prayers when we ask Hashem to give us the ability to "*learn and to teach*". First we must learn; this will enable us to teach others.

Especially in contemporary times in which the yearning for *Torah* observance is growing, it is incumbent upon us to reach out to our brethren. One must acknowledge, however, the risks incurred through involvement in more worldly circumstances. It is proper to issue words of caution in this regard, as well as words of encouragement. Perhaps the most important safeguard for one who hopes to bring others close to *Torah* is that he make *Torah* the primary focus of his own life. When one follows the way of life prescribed by the *Torah*, he is indeed protected from all harm by Hashem. He is granted the *siyata dishmaya* to succeed in his spiritual outreach.