

## Moshe sent off his father-in-law. (18:27)

Shlomo Hamelech says, *Lev yodea moras nafsho u'b'simchaso lo yisarev zar*, "The heart knows the bitterness of his soul and in his celebration a stranger shall not mix" (*Mishlei* 14:10). Hashem said, "My children were enslaved with mortar and stone, while Yisro was sitting comfortably in peace and calm in his land – and now he wants to see (and take part in) the celebration of the (Giving of) the Torah" (*Yalkut Shimoni, Yisro*). The *Yalkut* implies that the Revelation of the Giving of the Torah was reserved for those who had suffered in Egypt. Yisro had been in Midyan until now, safe from persecution and pain. He was a *zar*, stranger, to this occasion.

Yisro left everything – honor, wealth, all of the worldly pleasures that were available to the Chief Priest of Midyan. He left it all to come to the desolate wilderness to join the Jewish People, so that he could convert and be a part of their destiny. Is this not considered a sacrifice? Why is he viewed as an outsider? What more should he have relinquished?

**Horav Aharon Kotler, zl**, explains that, while Yisro did sacrifice much, he still had not achieved the spiritual plateau of *Klal Yisrael*, which resulted from their bondage. One who extends himself more, who expends greater toil in achieving his spiritual success, is on a higher, more elevated level, than one whose accomplishments come with less toil.

*Horav Yitzchak Hutner, zl*, related that during a meeting of American Torah leaders, someone recounted the following story concerning the **Maharil Disken, zl**. Apparently, a man came to him with a problem. He had taken a *chassan* for his daughter who was reputed to be a brilliant Torah scholar. Now he discovered that he was of average acumen – not brilliant at all. His question was: our sages teach that one should sell all of his assets in order to pay a dowry deserving of a son-in-law who is an erudite scholar. "What should I do?" the man asked. "I sought a scholar, and I obtained an average student."

The *Maharil Disken* replied, "The primary source for success in Torah study is learning *al y'dei ha'd'chak*, 'through hardship and toil.' This does not mean that one must be poor in order to achieve success in Torah. Regardless of one's material abundance, if he expends great effort in learning, such as would be the case with one who is not blessed with exceptional acumen, he will become a great *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar."

*Rav* Hutner said that when he related this story during the meeting of *rabbanim*, **Horav Aharon Kotler, zl**, (who had been in attendance) rose from his chair and went into another room. After a short while, *Rav* Hutner went looking for him. He found *Rav* Aharon in another room quietly weeping. When *Rav* Hutner asked *Rav* Aharon why he was crying, the Lakewood *Rosh Yeshivah* replied, "When I heard the story, I became weak with the realization that I have never really toiled to understand my learning. Hashem blessed me with the ability to grasp the Talmud and its commentators quickly and well."

This is the definition of *gadlus baTorah*, greatness in Torah. Rav Aharon's *shiurim* were the epitome of brilliance. His ability to analyze a subject and formulate the ideas with amazing clarity was peerless. Yet, one particular *shiur* always had special meaning to him. When he was escaping from Kletzk to Vilna and he was living with the fear of death over him, he visited a *bais hamedrash* to learn. It was in that *bais hamedrash*, during the days of fear for his life, that he was *mechadesh*, innovated, the original idea that was the basis for this *shiur*. Since it was the product of great effort and toil, it meant more to him than those *shiurim* which he innovated while safely ensconced in the *bais hamedrash*.