



## **Parasha Yitro**

February 15, 2020

*Torah: Exodus 18:1-20:23*

*Haftarah: Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6*

*Ketuvim Shlichim: Romans 13:8-14*

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha!* Our *parasha* today is *Yitro*. It is named for *Moshe's* father in law whom we see at other times by the names of *Ru'el* or *Hobab* and who is described in *Torah* as the Priest of Midian. His visit to the Israeli encampment was very opportune in ADONAI's timing, because his advice to Moses about dividing up the responsibility of judging the people may have kept Moses from pulling his hair out. *Yitro*, Jethro, said in effect, that Moses should certainly teach them *Torah* and the way that they should walk, but should also appoint judges over thousands, fifties, hundreds and tens and then only judge the more difficult cases himself. This was wonderful advice, advice which is still in use today. But, *Yitro*, for some reason decided not to remain with *B'nei Yisra'el*, and returned home to Midian. It is evident by his statement to Moses that he did believe in the G-d of Israel when he said this: 10 ....., "*Blessed be Adonai, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that Adonai is greater than all gods, since they had acted arrogantly against them*" (Exodus 18:10b-11 TLV). Jethro, who formerly was the pagan Priest of Midian, was not a Midianite, but a Kenite, one of the listed tribes in the area which ADONAI promised to Israel following His covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15. We hear no more of *Yitro* in Scripture, but we do read about the righteous Kenite woman in Judges 5, *Ja'el*, who crushed the head of the Canaanite general, Sisera, as Rabbi Herb pointed out in *Parasha Beshallah* last Shabbat. However limited Jethro's interaction was with Israel, it was extremely important, not only for Israel then, but also for us today.

In this *parasha*, we also find the Ten Words, also known as the Ten Commandments, which ADONAI gave at Sinai. I cannot miss this opportunity to tell a story which I only get to tell once per year. ADONAI said to the Midianites, "I have some commandments, would you like one?" The Midianites responded, "What are they like?" ADONAI said, "They are like, 'You shall not steal.'" The Midianites responded, "No, that would ruin our national plan of commerce." Then ADONAI went to the Canaanites and said, "I have some commandments, would you like one?" The Canaanites responded, "What are they like?" ADONAI said, "They are like, you shall not commit adultery. The Canaanites responded, "Oh no! That would ruin our weekends." Then ADONAI went to the Israelites and said, "I have some commandments, would you like one?" The Israelites replied, "How much do they cost.?" ADONAI replied, "Nothing; they're free." The Israelites replied, "We'll take ten!" Understanding the Ten Words and everything related in this *parasha* is very important. It's so important that we've covered it many times. And, so, we're not going to cover it today.

What we are going to talk about today is based in some way upon the Exodus story, but it includes all the ages afterward and beyond. It is partly factual and Scriptural and also partly prophetic. You will recognize the prophecy when we come to it. It relates to what has happened in the past and also what is happening today.

We can make a *midrash* based upon the Exodus. We all understand the term *midrash* to some degree? *Sha'ul* has used it in his letters a number of times. One of the most recognized is found in Galatians 4 where he uses this method to contrast Abraham's sons Isaac and Ishmael with the two covenants. Go back and check your notes from our Galatians study if you want to refresh your memory as to its meaning. But, for our purposes, a *midrash* is a Jewish allegory used to interpret text. Our *midrash* today is based upon the original Exodus from Egypt and the spiritual exodus that we as followers of Yeshua are in right now.

Several writers have compared the plagues of Egypt with events in the Book of Revelation, but that's not where we're going. We're going to look at what happened in the wilderness with Israel then and what is happening with the commonwealth of Israel in the wilderness today, of which we're all a part. There are spiritual struggles in both and there is redemption in both. In Moses' wilderness there was limited redemption through sacrifices while in our wilderness our redemption is total through Yeshua's sacrifice. In Moses' wilderness, the people rejected ADONAI's guidance and many failed. In our wilderness, as followers of Yeshua, many times our success is only partial, as we reject His full counsel and do our own thing, with some even rejecting Him and returning to slavery. Those who do not know Yeshua are not in the wilderness with us. They are symbolically the surrounding nations whose worship of false gods leaves them outside of ADONAI's eternal plan. Some will be lost, but many will be saved before the end. *Benei Yisra'el* entered into Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Promise, after 40 years. In our *midrash*, our entry into the promised land will be when Yeshua returns, not as *Mashiach ben Yosef*, the suffering servant Messiah when He came the first time, but as *Mashiach ben David*, our conquering King. That, in our *midrash*, will be our entry into the Promised Land and it will occur simultaneously with Yeshua's defeat of His pagan enemies with our help in His future army of Israel at the Battle of Armageddon. How we are to prepare to be a part of the group that gets to enter the Promised Land has been spelled out for us in *Torah*, Genesis to Revelation. Just as the new generation in Moses' wilderness had to be circumcised before being ready to enter into battle for the Promised land, so we in the present wilderness must keep our hearts circumcised and not let ourselves be tempted by all of the false gods around us.

We can also understand the forty years in Moses' wilderness, the time after the *Torah* was given at Sinai as our *midrash's* comparison with what we know as "the last days," the time that we are presently in. Our Sinai was when Yeshua made a New Covenant with Israel through His death on the stake and we as Israel, have travelled through the centuries in the present wilderness of the last days. When did our time in the wilderness, "the last days" begin? We learn through *Shimon Kefa's* sermon at *Shavuot* that the last days began when ADONAI poured out His *Ruach* on those gathered in the Temple fifty days after Yeshua's death on the stake, which was ten days after His ascension to the Father. The Prophet Joel foretold the coming of the last days and *Kefa* confirmed the fulfillment of his prophecy. He said: 1 "So it will be afterward, I will pour out My *Ruach* on all flesh: your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 2 "Also on the male and the female servants will I pour out My spirit in those days" (Acts 2: 1-2 TLV). In this prophecy, originally spoken by Joel, we see two groups of people. The sons and daughters and old and young men are Jews and the male and female servants are the Gentiles who will come to be a part of Israel. We all get ADONAI's Spirit poured out upon us. But, the point I want to make is that "the last days" began at that *Shavuot*, that Pentecost Day, and we have been living in the last days for 2000 years.

Today in our wilderness wandering, we are faced with a new Coronavirus. It is a plague, but so also were, the recent SARS epidemic and the HIV epidemic. You may never have thought of it in this way, but the Black Death, the plague of the middle ages, was a plague of the last days. As Yeshua said there would be, there have been plagues, earthquakes, famines, wars and many other terrible things throughout our Wilderness wandering of the last days. This is not to say that we should not take the Coronavirus seriously; we definitely should, and pray that it will be contained. But, it is only one more giant which we have faced in the wilderness. Now, we are much further along in our wilderness wandering and much closer to the end of our journey.

But, I feel the need to insert a mini-*midrash* within our *midrash*. Regarding his descendants, ADONAI said to Abraham: 16 *“Then in the fourth generation they will return here—for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete”* (Genesis 15:16 TLV). We may not be able to apply the fourth generation in our mini-*midrash*, but we can understand that the iniquity of the nations of today is not yet complete. Just as Israel had to wait for the iniquity of the Amorites to be complete, so we also must wait for the iniquity of the nations to be complete. We see all kinds of sins and perversions around us and it is getting worse and worse. Not only is this a time which ADONAI uses to allow the pagans, those who practice these abominations, to repent, but also, it is time to allow them to completely convict themselves if they do not repent. ADONAI has set a time when He will say “enough” and will send Yeshua back to take us with Him to prepare us for our assault on the Land of Canaan. In our *midrash*, that battle is what we know as Armageddon. That day is coming. But, ADONAI wishes that none would be lost and so, we continue to pray and witness to those who will listen until that day comes.

Even when we see all of these negative things happening, we should also be able to see the positive, the things of promise. You have all read this Scripture, but how literally have you taken it: 8 *“Moreover, in that day living waters will flow from Jerusalem, half toward the eastern sea and half toward the western sea, both in the summer and in the winter. 9 Adonai will then be King over all the earth. In that day Adonai will be Echad and His Name Echad”* (Zechariah 14:8 TLV). The last sentence is the conclusion of our *Aleinu* prayer, *“ba’yom hahu, yih’ye Adonai echad.”* But, how many of us really look at this river as something other than metaphor? We see it repeated in Revelation when John says: 1 *“Then the angel showed me a river of the water of life—bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the city’s street. On either side of the river was a tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations”* (Revelation 22:1-2 TLV). Perhaps there is metaphor here, but there is also reality. Do you really think that the rock will open on *Har Moriah*, Mount Moriah, in Jerusalem and water flow from there half into the Dead Sea and half into the Mediterranean Sea? Well, ADONAI has recently given us some encouragement to believe that and you may have seen the recent news item about the discovery of a new river in southern Israel, a river flowing into the Dead Sea. Recently announced to the public, it is a river over 10 kilometers in length which gushes all year long across the Judean desert through deep canyons toward the Dead Sea. ADONAI can form a new river anytime He wants. But, is this new river encouragement for us to believe the truth of His Word and to prepare for the coming of that greater river? I believe it is.

What about this Scripture: 12 *“The sixth angel poured out his bowl over the great river Euphrates; and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east”* (Revelation 16:12 TLV). When the Day of Armageddon comes we know that those coming to

battle in Israel will not be walking, but in planes, helicopters and other modern modes of transportation. But, they will also be able to bring their heavy equipment, tanks and other land vehicles right through the Euphrates which is in the process of drying up. The sixth angel has already poured out his bowl over the Euphrates River and the drying up is becoming a reality. It is being caused by dams built upriver in Syria, Turkey and Iran. There are now places where the Euphrates can be waded across and sources report that the new Ilisu Dam on the Tigris River in Turkey, when put into operation on July 1<sup>st</sup>, will decrease its flow into the Euphrates by 50%, even further “drying it up.” There is a related prophecy from Isaiah: 15 *“Then Adonai will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea. He will wave His hand over the River with His scorching wind, and will strike it into seven streams, and let men walk over in sandals. 16 So there will be a highway for the remnant of His people who remain, from Assyria, as there was for Israel in the day they came up out of the land of Egypt”* (Isaiah 11:15-16 TLV). The drying up of the River, the Euphrates, serves a dual purpose. Not only will it allow Israel’s enemies a pathway to attack, but also to allow the remnant to return. ADONAI is causing things to happen and they have been happening all during the “last days, the last 2000 years.” We need to get away from the notion that all of these things are future. Some are, but many are not. And, we should not take the Coronavirus lightly. It is dangerous. But, ADONAI is with us.

There is one final measure of hope pointing to the end of our wandering in the wilderness that I would like to explore with you today. It is the refilling of the *Kinneret*, the Sea of Gallilee. I don’t know how many of you have been reading in our weekly email what has been happening recently with its change in water level. I reported on January 11<sup>th</sup> that after one of the driest Novembers on record, there was heavy rainfall in December and the level of the lake rose 34 centimeters to -211.55 meters below sea level. Keep in mind that all of the lake is below sea level as is the Dead Sea. What is considered to be full pool is -208.8 meters below sea level. I reported on January 20<sup>th</sup> that continuing rain and snow caused the lake to rise to -210.6 meters or 6.12 feet from full pool. My last report in the newsletter is of February 11<sup>th</sup> when it was reported with continued rains, the lake is now 1.24 meters, about 4 feet, from full pool. But, the good news does not end there. On February 13<sup>th</sup>, a report from Israel Water Authority told that lake rose by 3.5 centimeters in the last day and now stands at -209.9 meters, only 3.9 feet from a full lake.

This is amazing and also great news for Israel, which has been suffering a water shortage for more than 20 years. Predictions are that the lake will continue to rise and the Water Authority is prepared to open *Degania* Dam soon. This dam allows water from the lake to enter the Jordan River and will probably be opened even before full pool to prevent an overflow if the rains continue. And, rains are predicted to continue. This dam has not been opened since 1992 and the Jordan River is much reduced in size because of the drought. And, the Dead Sea has also suffered from the drought. When we first visited the Dead Sea for swimming about 26 years ago, it was just a short walk from the bathhouse to the water. Now, the water is so far out that you have to catch a tram to get there. Water flowing into the Jordan will help, not only to refill the Dead Sea, but also to make it fresh, along with the water of the newly discovered river and the river which will flow from ADONAI’s throne “in that day.” In Ezekiel 47, a man whose appearance was like bronze, told Ezekiel about a river which would flow from the Temple: 6 *He said to me, “Have you seen this, son of man?” Then he brought me back to the bank of the river. 7 When I had returned, behold, there were very many trees on one side and on the other, along the bank of the river. 8 Then he said to me, “These waters go out toward the eastern region. They go down to the Arabah and enter the*

sea. When they arrive at the sea, the waters of the sea will flow and will become fresh” (Ezekiel 47:6-8 TLV).

What does all this about the Sea of Galilee have to do with prophecy? Don't forget what ADONAI said to Israel just before they entered in to capture the Land of Canaan: 10 *“For the land you are going in to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you came. There you planted your seed and watered it by foot, like a vegetable garden. 11 But the land you are crossing over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, drinking from the rain of the heavens it drinks in water. 12 It is a land that Adonai your God cares for—the eyes of Adonai your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year up to the end of the year. 13 “Now if you listen obediently to My mitzvot that I am commanding you today—to love Adonai your God and to serve Him with all your heart and soul— 14 then I will give rain for your land in its season—the early rain and the late rain —so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and olive oil. 15 I will give grass in your field for your livestock, and you will eat and be satisfied. 16 Watch yourselves, so your heart is not deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them. 17 Then the anger of Adonai will be kindled against you, so He will shut up the sky so that there will be no rain and the soil will not yield its produce. Then you will perish quickly from the good land Adonai is giving you”* (Deuteronomy 11:10-17 TLV). In Deuteronomy 28 we find the Blessings and the Curses. The last one of the blessings is this: 12 “Adonai will open for you His good storehouse—the heavens—to give rain for your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. 13 Adonai will make you the head and not the tail, and you will be only above and not below—if you listen to the mitzvot of Adonai your God that I am commanding you today, careful to do them, 14 and do not turn aside from any of the words I am commanding you today, to the right or the left, to go after other gods in order to serve them” (Deuteronomy 28:12-14 TLV). Why is ADONAI doing this today? We know that many in Israel are not following the *mitzvot* and Tel Aviv is a virtual sin city. But, we don't discount the presence of the Messianic Jews in Israel and their prayers and our prayers and the prayers of Yeshua's followers worldwide. Is the water level of the Sea of Galilee spiritually related to Yeshua's return to earth? I'm praying that it is, and that when it reaches full pool, we will see even more things happen. Whether or not it will be His return, we don't know, but something powerful is happening. As ADONAI said through Moses in the Scripture we just read, Israel will be made the head and not the tail. To the dismay of her enemies in the world, that is happening even now.

When I last spoke to you, the message was about being filled with the Holy Spirit. That message continues today. Without the power of ADONAI's Spirit living in us, we cannot walk as faithful *talmidim* of Yeshua in these last days. As Joel prophesied and *Shimon Kefa* confirmed, the *Ruach* has been poured out on us, but we have to make the decision to allow the Spirit to work in our lives. We must be open to prophesying and to dreaming dreams, as Joel prophesied, but we must also allow the *Ruach* to work in our lives in other ways. We cannot be specialists in the *Ruach*, the Holy Spirit, but must be general practitioners. Just as the old country doctor did everything from treating colds to birthing babies to doing surgery, so must we allow the *Ruach* to make us general practitioners. We cannot just specialize in prophecy. We cannot just specialize in worship. We cannot just specialize in *Torah* study. We cannot just specialize in doing good works. We must allow the *Ruach* to lead us in doing all of these things. And, if we neglect even one part of that which Yeshua has called us to do, we are quenching the Holy Spirit. *Sha'ul* taught: 19 *“Do not quench the Spirit, 20 do not despise prophetic messages, 21 but test all things, hold fast to what is good, 22 keep away from every kind of evil”* (1Thessalonians 5:19-22 TLV). He also said: 30 *“Do*

not grieve the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30 TLV). Isn’t this also related to quenching the Spirit? We all quench the Spirit in some way at some time, but we are all being called to higher service. Don’t be a specialist. Read your Bible daily and study *Torah*, but also be open to prophesy. Do good deeds, but also turn away from destructive behavior. Don’t be like I have been and let your body and your health go to pot before you try to do something about it. If you are overweight, realize that the day is coming when you will have to pay the piper. I had to. Not respecting that our bodies are the sanctuary of the *Ruach HaKodesh* is something that many struggle with. If you smoke, stop before you have to pay the piper. If you overeat, stop before you have to pay the piper. These things which happen to us are warnings there to let us know that we are not allowing the Spirit to work in our lives. But, the reason that we should not do these destructive things to our bodies is because our goal is to be obedient to ADONAI and to Yeshua. ADONAI said, be holy for I am holy. Be set apart from all these worldly things and allow the *Ruach* to work in you.

I conclude with some thoughts about another of Joel’s prophecies: 23 “So be glad, children of Zion, and rejoice in Adonai, your God. For He gives you the early rain for prosperity, Yes, He will bring down rain for you, the early and latter rain as before. 24 The threshing floors will be full of grain and the vats will overflow with new wine and fresh oil. 25 “I shall restore to you the years that the locust, the swarming locust, the canker-worm and the caterpillar have eaten— My great army that I sent among you” (Joel 2:23-25 TLV). This is literal rain, rain which came at two different times of the year. The early rains fell in late October and early November and the latter rains in the spring in late March and early April. But, as we’ve seen with regard to the Sea of Galilee, ADONAI’s rain did not begin with the early rain period of October-November, but in December and it has continued to rain. What are we to make of this? We are experiencing His great mercy that we are through this physical rain. But, physical rain is also related to spiritual rain. The early spiritual rain of the Holy Spirit began at *Shavuot* 2000 years ago and continues today. But, I believe that there is a latter spiritual rain in which ADONAI will pour out even more of His Spirit just as He is currently pouring out physical rain in the Land of Israel. We must be open to it and not quench the Spirit.

This is our *midrash* on the Exodus and being in the wilderness. We are still in the wilderness, but are getting very close to the metaphorical Jordan River and crossing over into the Promised Land. Do not let the giants in the land frighten you. There is tribulation in the world as shown by famine, plague and wars throughout the last 2000 years. The level of evil in the world today is unreal and is exploding as *HaSatan* is pulling out all the stops in his hatred of Yeshua and His followers. But, the day of deliverance is coming. When Yeshua spoke on the Mount of Olives during His last week on earth, He said: 14 “This Good News of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14 TLV). And then He said: 42 “Therefore stay alert; for you do not know what day your Lord is coming. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what time the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and not let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:42-44 TLV). Our time in the wilderness will soon come to an end, but as Yeshua’s *talmidim*, we must continue to be vigilant. Allow the early rain of the Spirit to work in your life now as we await the latter rain of the Spirit before concluding our time in the wilderness and Yeshua’s return. *Shabbat shalom!*