

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Yisro 5784

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Moshe has two sons.

וְשֵׁם הָאֶחָד אֱלִיעֶזֶר כִּי־אֱלֹקֵי אָבִי בְעֶזְרִי וַיַּצִּילֵנִי מִתְּהַרְבַּת פַּרְעֹה:

“And the name of one of them Eliezer, because ‘the Lord of my Father was my help, and He saved me from Pharaoh’s sword.’” (Shmos 18:4).

Why did Moshe say “my father’s Lord” as opposed to his own? Also, what is the term “was my help” as opposed to “helped me?” And is “and He saved me from Pharaoh’s sword” a separate reason for the name? When did Hashem save Moshe from Pharaoh’s sword?

Where has Tziporah, Moshe’s wife, and his two children been all this time? The pasuk says, **וַיִּקַּח יִטְרוֹ חֲתָן מִשָּׁה אֶת־צִפּוֹרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ מִשָּׁה אַחֵר שְׁלוּחֵיהֶּן:** “And Yisro, the father-in-law of Moshe, took, Tziporah, Moshe’s wife, after he sent her.” (Ibid 18:2). If it was Moshe that sent her, when did he send her?

Moshe and Tziporah had a son, Gershom, **כִּי אָמַר גֵּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ נֹכְרִיָה,** “because he said, ‘I have been a stranger in a foreign land.’” (Ibid 2:22). This reasoning is repeated here. (Ibid 18:3). What foreign land was he a stranger in? He was still living in Midian when he had Gershom, so it should have said, “I am a stranger.” There are two possible explanations. Either he wandered to other lands before settling in Midian as the pasuk implies. “And Moshe fled from Pharaoh and he came to settle in the Land of Midian, and he sat by the well.” (Ibid 2:15). This means that he fled from Eretz Mitzrayim, took the journey through the wilderness, through Shur. (Shur is the direct route from Goshen through the wilderness to Midbar Sin, in what is now Saudia Arabia, where Eretz Midian was and where the Mount of Hashem is). He was a stranger in those lands. He then eventually settled in Eretz Midian and met Yisro’s daughters. The other possibility is that he considered living in Pharaoh’s palace as a stranger in a foreign land. While Goshen belonged to Bnei Yisroel (see Bereishis 47:27), the Upper Egypt lands in the south, where Thebes is and where Pharaoh’s palace was, did not belong to Bnei Yisroel. Nor was it promised to Bnei Yisroel, while Goshen was. (See ibid 15:18). Therefore, living in Thebes, with Pharaoh, in Eretz Mitzrayim, he was a stranger in a land not his own.

Moshe has Eliezer later. After speaking to Hashem on the Har Hashem, and returning to Midian, “Moshe took his wife and his sons...and he returned to Eretz Mitzrayim.” (Shmos 4:20). This is the first reference to Moshe’s second son. Then the Torah mentions three of the hardest pesukim to translate and understand in the Torah. Before explaining those three pesukim, some context must be referenced to decipher the Torah’s pronouns. First piece of context is “And Hashem said to Moshe in Midian, ‘Go back to Mitzrayim because all the men died, who sought your soul.’” (Ibid 4:19). Second

piece of context is, when Moshe arrived at the inn, Hashem appeared to Moshe and gave him final instructions. (Ibid 4:21-23).

The Torah then says, וַיְהִי בַדֶּרֶךְ בַּמְלֶוֶן וַיִּפְגְּשֵׁהוּ הַיְיָ וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הָמִיתוּ הַיְיָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ בַּמְלֶוֶן וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הָמִיתוּ הַיְיָ “And it was on the way, in the inn that Hashem had met him there, and he wanted to kill him.” (Shmos 4:24). On the way back to Mitzrayim, while at the inn where Hashem met Moshe to give him His final instructions, a man was there to kill Moshe. Apparently, while the original Pharaoh and all the Egyptian courtesans who sought death to Moshe died already, a bounty was still outstanding on Moshe’s head. וַתִּקַּח צִפּוֹרָה צֹר וַתִּכְרֹת אֶת־עֶרְלַת בְּנֶהּ וַתִּגַּע לְרַגְלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי חֲתָן־דְּמַיִם אַתָּה. “And Tziporah took a flint and she cut the foreskin of her son, and she touched his legs, and she said, ‘Because a blood groom you are to me.’” (Ibid 4:25). Miriam had picked up a flintstone to circumcise her new baby son, the one now mentioned when Moshe was going to return – “sons.” She used that to threaten the bounty hunter to let Moshe go. וַיִּרְרַי מִיָּדָיו וַיִּשְׁלַח יָדָיו וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַבֶּן וַיִּבְרֹךְ אֶת־הַיְיָ וַיֹּאמֶר מִכֵּן הָיִיתָ דְּמַיִם לַמִּוֹלֵת: “Ane he released him. Then she said, ‘Now you are a blood groom because of circumcision.’” (Ibid 4:26). Instead of killing the man, when he let Moshe go, he then converted and allowed Moshe and Tziporah to circumcise him. The context as described makes sense, lyrically, because the entire episode is bracketed by breaks—from Hashem telling Moshe to return now that no one there sought his life, to Hashem’s final instructions, to the episode of saving Moshe’s life. It is all one segment and the context gives clarity to the pesukim.

The Torah already said that Moshe fled from Pharaoh. (Ibid 2:15). Moshe fled after killing the important Egyptian courtesan. This episode also taught Moshe the power of mitzvos, how he was saved with the merit of circumcision.

When naming Eliezer, Moshe had this in mind. “The Lord of my fathers was my help.” It was not necessarily Hashem appearing to him on the Mountain of Hashem and making him His vassal. It was the mesorah from Avraham—to have his children circumcised. (Bereishis 17:27). Midian, a descendant of Avraham and Keturah, had the custom of circumcision. Yisro, even if not a Midian himself, by being the High Priest of Midian and living in the lands knew of the custom. Moshe, may have had the custom from his parents—because he was given away when he was three—or from Midian. “My father” refers to Avraham. That mesorah was his help. Also, Hashem saved Moshe from Pharaoh’s sword. Not the actual sword but the hired sword. That is why Eliezer had this name, on those two accounts.

Moshe recounts the good news to Yisro. וַיֹּאמֶר יִתְרוֹ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֲשֶׁר הִצִּיל אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וּמִיַּד מִצְרַיִם: “And Yisro said, ‘Blessed is Hashem, that saved you from the hand of Mitzrayim and the hand of Pharaoh, and has saved the nation from under the hand of Mitzrayim.’” (Shmos 18:10). Yisro thanks Hashem for having Moshe, Tziporah, and the children being saved from the hand of Mitzrayim and the hand of Pharaoh, personally (the bounty hunter), and then he thanks Hashem for saving the entire people, too (from their burdens). Clearly, after the incident at the inn, Moshe sent his family back. Aharon met Moshe in the wilderness but there is no mention of the family or Aharon inquiring after them. Then it was Moshe and Aharon who went—alone—to gather the elders. (Ibid 4:29). Moshe had sent them back.