



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

RAV KEHILLA, OHEL EPHRAIM IN NOFEI HASHEMESH

MAGGID SHIUR, DAF YOMI, OU.ORG

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Act Upon Inspiration

Parashat Yitro opens with the words “ישמע” (Yitro heard). Rashi famously asks: *What did Yitro hear?* The Torah itself seems explicit: he heard about the miracles in Egypt and the Exodus from Mitzrayim. These events were hardly private. In fact, *Az Yashir* tells us, “עמים ירגזון” —the nations heard and trembled. The entire world was aware.

If so, why does the Torah single out Yitro’s hearing?

Rabbi Frand (*Power of a Vort*) suggests that the answer emerges from a careful reading of Rashi’s words. Rashi does not ask simply what Yitro heard; rather, he asks: “מה שמעך שמע” —*what did Yitro hear that caused him to come?* Many people heard. Yitro was the one who **moved**.

The miracles inspired awe across the globe, but they did not change lives. Yitro was different. He translated inspiration into action. The

Torah highlights not the hearing itself, but what the hearing produced.

People can witness extraordinary events and yet remain unchanged. Inspiration, if not seized, is fleeting. How, then, do we ensure that moments of spiritual awakening leave a lasting impact?

Rashi, citing the Gemara (Zevachim 116a), provides the answer: *Yitro heard—and he came*. He acted immediately. Yitro understood that when one encounters the hand of God, delay is dangerous. Procrastination dulls inspiration, and enthusiasm dissipates with time. To preserve the moment, one must act upon it.

This idea is illustrated by a story told about Rothschild. A poor man once came to his home seeking charity. Rothschild was deeply moved by the man’s story, but he had no money with him and asked the man to return the next day. As the poor man was leaving, Rothschild suddenly ran after him and handed him his gold watch.

The man was confused. “Why are you giving me this?”

Rothschild explained: “Right now, I am inspired by your situation and determined to give generously. By tomorrow, that inspiration may fade, and I may give less. This watch ensures that I act today on the resolve I feel now.”

Rothschild understood what Yitro understood: inspiration must be anchored in action.

We all experience moments of spiritual elevation—during davening, a shiur, a kumzitz, or a quiet moment of reflection. The danger is not failing to feel inspired; the danger is letting inspiration pass without consequence. Growth

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happens when we translate emotion into deed, when we take even one concrete step that gives permanence to a fleeting moment.

Yitro teaches us that greatness is not reserved for prophets or miracle-witnesses. It belongs to those who respond. Many heard—but only Yitro came.

The question Parashat Yitro poses to us is not *what did you hear?* Rather - *what did you do with what you heard?* Inspiration is a gift, but it is also a responsibility. If it leads nowhere, it fades. If it leads to action—even something small—it becomes transformational.

When a thought stirs us to improve, when a moment pushes us to be better, that is our *וישמע יתרו*. The challenge is to become the ones who *come*. To act today, not tomorrow. To turn a spark into a step, and a step into a journey.

May we have the wisdom to recognize those moments—and the courage to act upon them swiftly. ■



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