

**Journeys with
the Prophets:
Part 17**

The Book of Judges (Shofetim) Chapter 13

by Rabbi Dr Moshe Freedman, Northwood United Synagogue

Summary: After describing 40 years of Philistine oppression, we are introduced to Manoach from the tribe of Dan and his wife, who had not yet been blessed with a child. An angel informed her that she would bear a child who would save the Jewish people from the Philistines. Part of this message was the stipulation that she should refrain from consuming any grape products so that the child will be a Nazirite (who abstains from grape products) 'from the womb'. After she related this to Manoach, he prayed to see the angel, who reiterated the message. Manoach gave offerings to G-d, his wife gave birth and called the child Shimshon (Samson).

A Deeper Look: While Manoach's wife was not mentioned by name, the Talmud (Bava Batra 91a) explains that she was called Tzeleponit, identifying her with a woman of a very similar name in Chronicles I (4:3). The Midrash explains that her name reflected the distinction in which she merited to see an angel. The word *tzel* literally means shadow, but can refer to an angel; the word *poneh* means 'to whom she turned'.



After Manoach requested to see the angel, it returned and related the same message directly to him. At the end of the dialogue, Manoach asked the angel its name, since the name of an angel defines its mission (see also Bereishit 32:30). After the angel replied, "why do you want to know my name?" the verse concludes with the words "*v'hi peli*" (Shofetim 13:18). The word *peli* means 'wondrous', implying that the angel was astonished by the question. Alternatively, it can mean 'hidden', thus reading 'my name is hidden [from you]'.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Ya'akov Culi (d. 1732) renders the phrase to mean 'it [my name] is Peli'. The root of the word *peli* (פלא) can also mean to 'separate'. This links with the Biblical verse relating to Nazirite abstention (Bemidbar 6:2) – *ki yafli neder* – meaning 'when you shall separate by means of a vow'. Shimshon will be a Nazirite who will separate himself from grape products and refrain from cutting his hair. His mission was planned by G-d from before his birth. However, in the next three parts of this series we will examine how his separation from normality defined his heroic but often tumultuous life and its tragic ending.

Yitro: A Dual Reaction

by Rabbi Gavin Broder
London Region University Chaplain

The sidrah opens by informing us that Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law, heard about all the miracles that G-d had performed for the Jewish People. Yitro then made his way to the desert to meet up with them. Once Yitro reunited with Moshe, Moshe informed him about "everything that G-d had done to Pharaoh and Egypt for Israel's sake, all the trouble that had befallen them, and that G-d had rescued them" (Shemot 18:8).

The term used in the Torah to describe Yitro's reaction when Moshe gives him the full account of the story is "*vayichad Yitro*" (ibid 18":9). Rashi (d. 1105) offers two explanations for this term. The first explanation is that upon hearing what transpired, Yitro was happy. The second is that his flesh became prickly (goose-flesh), as he was pained to

hear about the demise of the Egyptians. How is it possible to have two completely opposite interpretations of Yitro's feelings? Moreover, why did Yitro react at all when hearing news that he already knew?

The *Chatam Sofer* (Rabbi Moshe Sofer d. 1839), comments on the verses (Devarim 7:17,18), "Perhaps you will say in your heart, 'These nations are more numerous than us. How will we be able to drive them out?' Do not fear them. You shall remember what G-d, your Lord, did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt". He writes that the salvation and success of the Jewish people is rooted in the Exodus from Egypt. When a person feels depressed, distressed or in a difficult situation, recalling the Exodus can help to lift their spirits. The cataclysmic departure from Egypt was so powerful that we mention it in our prayers at least twice a day. It is also the

theme of the Pesach seder, when the more enhanced the way the story is related, the greater the influence it has on us.

A contemporary teacher, Rabbi Moshe Wolfson (Yeshivat Torah Veda'at, New York), suggests that Yitro was a truthful person aspiring to grow in spirituality. When he first heard about the miracles of the splitting of the sea, the war against Amalek and the manna from heaven, he adduced that the source of these miracles was the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt. Wanting to explore that concept, he

immediately left his home in Midian and travelled through the desert towards the Jewish people. Yitro knew that the best way of internalising this realisation was to hear about

the Exodus from Moshe, the greatest person to experience this episode. When Moshe retold the events and the spiritual change that had resulted from it, Yitro experienced a deeper understanding of the difference between good and bad, evil and righteousness, between the experience of the Jew while still in Egypt and the experience after the Exodus.

Before coming to Moshe, Yitro understood this concept on a superficial level. However, once he heard about it from Moshe directly, he was far more deeply affected. This caused him to break out in goosebumps. At the same time, Yitro understood that since he had internalised his feelings, he had thereby changed and this caused him happiness. Therefore both explanations of Rashi are correct in describing Yitro's reaction.

Yitro's openness to spiritual understanding and growth is to be greatly admired.



70 Days for
70 Years

The Massacre of the Jews of Hungary

by Dayan Elimelech Vanzetta, Project Manager, 70 Days for 70 Years

According to a poll conducted by the editors of *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, one of the most popular quotations of modern times is: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." As sad as it may be, it is not surprising that a quotation mentioning the triumph of evil and the apathy of good men be so popular. Unfortunately this has occurred and reoccurred time and again.

On 19 March 1944, Hungary was invaded by Germany after the Hungarian government had signed an armistice with the Soviet Union, which were closing in on its borders. Hungary had been a member of the Axis since 1940. However, despite open anti-Semitism and many restrictions imposed on its Jewish and Roma populations, there had been virtually no deportations to concentration camps until the German invasion.

Yet this all changed once fascist leader Ferenc Szalasi set up a new government supported by and aligned with Berlin. From that fateful moment onwards, Jews and Romas became the victims of systematic deportations to Auschwitz. Between 15 May and 9 July 1944, 437,402 Jews were sent to concentration camps, all but 15,000 of them to Auschwitz-Birkenau. 90% of the deportees were instantly killed upon arrival. By the end of the war, close to 606,000 Hungarian Jews had been murdered.

After such an indescribable tragedy, one would hope that open manifestations of anti-Semitism would never again occur on Hungarian soil. Unfortunately Hungary's

current state of affairs proves otherwise.

Marton Gyongyosi is an Irish-educated member of the far-right Jobbik party. He is a "democratically" elected member of the Hungarian Parliament. Since November 2014, he has been Vice President of the Parliament's Commission on Foreign Affairs. In November 2012, Gyongyosi called for the compulsory registration of all Jews in Hungary on the basis that they pose a national threat to the country. The fact that he garnered enough votes to make it to Parliament and that he now occupies such an important government post demonstrates that he is not alone when it comes to his ideology and philosophy. Rather he represents and speaks for those who chose him as their mouthpiece.

As another quotation, attributed to Sir Edmund Burke, states: "Those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it." What we are witnessing in Hungary and other countries in Europe is more than a 'slap in the face' of our loved ones who were savagely murdered during the Shoah. It is an offence to their memory and a threat to our Jewish identity. Just like we cannot be oblivious to our past, we cannot cease to pay attention to our present and future.

It is therefore important that we embrace and spread the message embodied by 70 days for 70 years of remembering the past in order to build the future. Hopefully by doing so we will be making our contribution to a future in which tolerance, mutual respect and understanding are the unthreatened common denominators of society.



70 Days
for 70 Years

Remember the past to build the future

The Smoked Salmon and Cream Cheese Dilemma: Part 2

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz, KLBD

Last week we discussed the Talmudic prohibition and halachic ramifications of mixing meat (or fowl) and fish due to the potential health risk involved.

However, one might ask that there are plenty of people in the world who do mix meat and fish, and yet there has not been any known recent outbreaks of the skin disease referenced by the Talmud as a consequence of such eating! Is it possible that this health risk no longer applies?

The *Magen Avraham* (Rabbi Avraham Gombiner d. 1682) actually addresses this concern and advances the notion that natural environmental conditions (*teva*) have changed and therefore one no longer has to worry about the risks of eating meat and fish together. Other notable authorities, including the *Aruch HaShulchan* (Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein d.1908) seem to accept his argument. Furthermore, there is no mention of this danger of eating meat and fish together in any of the works of the Rambam (Maimonides d. 1204), who was a doctor.

However, other authorities do not agree with this novel approach and maintain that the basic halacha follows the Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law, written 1563) so that mixing meat and fish therefore remains forbidden.

For example, the observant consumer will notice the occasional addition of an "F" to the KLBD logo to indicate the inclusion of a fish ingredient, such as on Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce.

Some Rabbinic authorities take a compromise stand-point, taking the lenient opinion into consideration to allow for some leeway in certain questionable situations.

For example, one leniency is that one may cook fish in a meaty pot, as long as no actual meat remains in the pot. The same would apply to cooking fish (by itself) in a meaty oven.

What does that have to do with mixing fish and *milk*, which was our original question last week?

We will answer that question next week...



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