

FEBRUARY 14, 2020

Parashat Yitro

Exodus 18:1-20:23

Taught By:

Dan & Omer

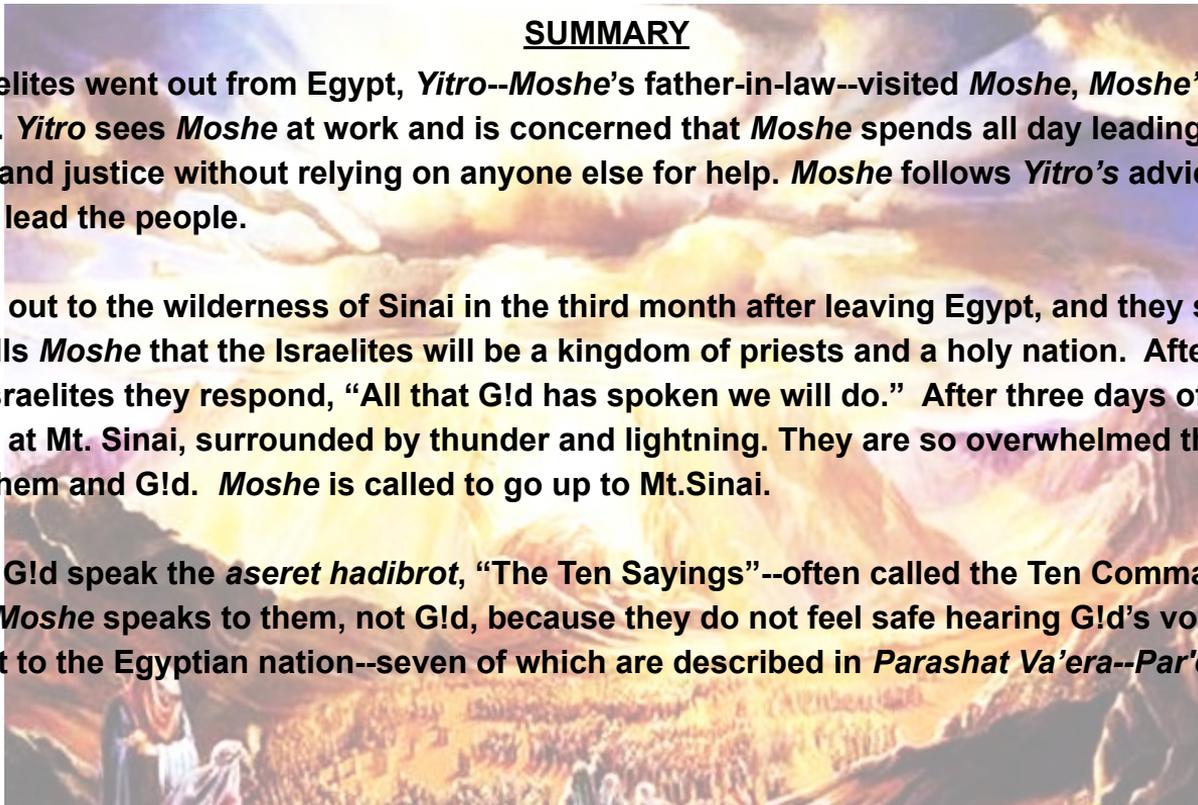


SUMMARY

Soon after the Israelites went out from Egypt, *Yitro*--*Moshe's* father-in-law--visited *Moshe*, *Moshe's* wife *Tziporah*, and their two sons. *Yitro* sees *Moshe* at work and is concerned that *Moshe* spends all day leading the people in matters of politics and justice without relying on anyone else for help. *Moshe* follows *Yitro's* advice and appoints judges to help him lead the people.

The Israelites went out to the wilderness of Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt, and they set up camp in front of Mt. Sinai. G!d tells *Moshe* that the Israelites will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. After sharing this promise with the Israelites they respond, "All that G!d has spoken we will do." After three days of getting ready the Israelites meet G!d at Mt. Sinai, surrounded by thunder and lightning. They are so overwhelmed that they ask *Moshe* to stand between them and G!d. *Moshe* is called to go up to Mt.Sinai.

The Israelites hear G!d speak the *aseret hadibrot*, "The Ten Sayings"--often called the Ten Commandments. Then they ask that only *Moshe* speaks to them, not G!d, because they do not feel safe hearing G!d's voice. After each terrible plague sent to the Egyptian nation--seven of which are described in *Parashat Va'era*--*Par'oh* refuses to free the Israelites.



1) When the Israelites stood at Mt. Sinai to receive the *Torah*, they saw sounds, and flaming torches, and the *shofar* sound, and the smoking mountain. What sounds do you imagine they might have seen?

OMER: I imagine that these sounds might have looked like angels and that G!d sent these angel-sounds to show the Israelites that G!d is real and that G!d is there.

DAN: Maybe they are seeing the sounds of G!d. This is a once-in-a-lifetime or once-ever-in-the-universe experience! The Israelites have already experienced seeing G!d in a pillar of cloud or a pillar of fire and now they're seeing G!d in all these sounds! Maybe receiving *Torah* involves seeing more of G!d.

2) The *Torah* teaches us that this happened during the daytime. Is that how you imagine it? What time of day do you imagine this felt like?

DAN: It feels like this should be at night, because this feels mysterious and confusing and you would see the flames better at night.

OMER: Maybe it's dark, but it's actually daytime and G!d is making it dark in the middle of the day. G!d is doing all sorts of things here to show G!d's power and that G!d is in control.



3) Don't you think that seeing sounds would be confusing? Why would G!d choose to do these things and create this kind of a mood when G!d gives the Israelites *Torah*?

OMER: I think that this shows that God has full control over everything and that G!d can really do absolutely anything G!d wants—not like people. Confusing people can be a way of having power over them.

DAN: I think G!d is making the feeling of confusion a part of the experience of receiving *Torah* because *Torah* is confusing. Being confused can be frustrating, but it can also make you interested in something. Being confused can encourage you to talk with other people to try to understand things better.