

# לדרוש בשבת

## Parashat Yitro 5781

February 5 - 6 2021

This week's Lidrosh B'Shabbat is based on *Covenantal Brothers*  
by Rabbi David Silber

### Source: Shemot 2:18

When we are first introduced to Yitro, he is named Reuel.

### Source: Shemot 3:1

In the opening of Shemot 3, Yitro is renamed "Yitro," even though he was introduced to us at Reuel a few verses earlier.

What causes the change?

The root of the name Yitro (יתרו) is יתר, מיותר. It means extra or superfluous. For Moshe, Yitro has become superfluous at this moment in time, at the encounter with God at the burning bush. We will return to this scene in a moment.

### Source: Shemot 4:18

After the encounter with God, Moshe tells Yitro that he must return to his brothers in Egypt, to see if they're still alive. In what sense are the Israelites his brothers?

### Source: Shemot 3

In the story of the burning bush, God says to Moshe,

"אנכי אלוהי אביך, אלוהי אברהם ואלוהי יצחק ואלוהי יעקב" -

*I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*

In his response to God, Moshe says: if I go to the people and tell them that the God of their fathers has sent me, they will ask for Your name. What shall I tell them?" And God gives two answers.

The first answer is unclear - אהיה אשר אהיה - *I will be that which I will be*. Is this an answer, or is God saying that He is what He is, so therefore don't ask so many questions?

In any case, He gives a second answer: Moshe should tell Bnei Yisrael that he is

"יהוה אלוהי אבותיכם, אלוהי אברהם, יצחק ואלוהי יעקב" -

*The Lord of their fathers, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*

That is God's name. If the God of their fathers and the God of your (Moshe)'s father are the same, then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael are brothers. That's the point.

Who then is Yitro, Mr. Extra, Mr. Superfluous?

He's not Moshe's brother, not the son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is a Midianite.

When Moshe says to Yitro that he has to go save his brothers and see if they're still alive, he's saying that his mission is to save his *brothers* — not the whole world, but his brothers, his people.

Yitro becomes superfluous at the burning bush, when God appears to Moshe as the God of his fathers.

Given this introduction and context, how do you interpret the beginning of Parashat Yitro? Discuss!

**שבת שלום!**