

פרשת יתרו, which connects יתרו's arrival to join כלל ישראל with the עשרת הדיברות, has intrigued throughout history, prompting them to explore the relationship between these events. In my younger days, I used a very בעלכתישע explanation: משה רבינו gave יתרו a practical עצה, so פרשת יתרו rewarded him by placing the עשרת הדיברות in פרשת יתרו.

On a deeper level, יתרו's experiences serve as an introduction to the עשרת הדיברות, particularly לא תחמוד. As the בית הלוי points out, לא תחמוד is an exceptionally challenging מצוה; how is it possible for us to control our innermost thoughts and not want something which we should not have?

The בית הלוי offers two תירוצים. The first is from the אבן עזרא, that by cultivating יראת שמים and recognizing that some things are simply beyond our reach, we can train ourselves not to desire them. He uses a משל of a farmhand watching a princess's carriage pass by; the farmhand feels no desire for her because she is beyond his ken. Similarly, we should consider certain desires as unattainable, thereby removing them from our sphere of interest.

The second תירוץ, a classic one, illustrates how momentary יראה can dissolve even the strongest תאוות. Imagine someone driven by a strong תאוה, he really wants to do something, whatever it may be, whether it's money or business or wasting time or going to the movies or whatever תאוה he has, and he's rushing to fulfill it on a stormy winter day [as we have here in New York. I'm happy for all those people of our relatives who are in warmer climates and enjoying the weather, but here it is cold and it's getting colder.] As he hurries, he slips on an icy patch, and in that instant of falling, all his desires vanish. The בית הלוי teaches that even a small amount of יראת שמים, akin to the fear of falling, can greatly diminish one's יצר הרע. By focusing on יראת שמים and contemplating the גדולת הבורא and keep in mind תמיד ה' לנגדי, we can make the מצוה of לא תחמוד more attainable, if not easy, then certainly easier.

Rabbi Doctor Twerski discusses an interesting concept on שמו"ק שנהבוא יתברך שמו. אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שנהבוא יתברך שמו. This is the only מאמין אני מאמין that requires a פסוק as a ראיה because it's a concept even many גדולים struggled with.

Yet יתרו's story exemplifies this belief. יתרו said, "I know that הקדוש ברוך הוא is Hashem because I witnessed פרעה and his advisors plotting in secret. Hashem repaid them מידה כנגד מידה with the exact punishments corresponding to their plots against כלל ישראל. This proves that הקדוש ברוך הוא knows our innermost thoughts."

That is such a tremendously beautiful introduction to the עשרת הדיברות, particularly לא תחמוד. The עשרת הדיברות is our basis of אמונה, no different than any other part of the תורה, no different than any other מצוה. But these are the pillars of our אמונה בשם, the יראת שמים that we have to have. And that יראת שמים can be associated, particularly with לא תחמוד, by realizing הקדוש ברוך הוא does know our innermost thoughts, and we therefore have to appreciate His גדלות and be able to respond to that by working harder on our יראת שמים and being successful in all that we do. Good Shabbos!

