

פרשת יתרו

Conflicting Emotions.

Most of us are probably familiar with this term which indicates a personal state of confusion or even turmoil, depending on the situation.

'Conflicting emotions' occurs when an event takes place that makes me happy and sad at the same time.

Perhaps one who has never heard of this idea would think that such a mind-set is indicative of an unhealthy person, someone who is confused about his or her own life.

But that is certainly not necessarily the case.

The Halachah presents us with such a situation. Let us learn an introduction to the aforementioned situations and then deal with the situations themselves.

Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim Siman 222, s'ifim 1-3 teach:

על שמועות שהם טובות לו לבדו מברך: שהחיינו; ואם הן טובות לו ולאחרים,
מברך: הטוב והמטיב.

על שמועות רעות מברך: ברוך אתה ה' א...ל'קיננו מלך העולם דיין האמת.

חייב אדם לברך על הרעה בדעת שלמה ובנפש חפצה כדרך שמברך בשמחה על הטובה, כי הרעה לעובדי השם היא שמחתם וטובתם, כיון שמקבל מאהבה מה שגזר עליו השם נמצא שבקבלת רעה זו הוא עובד את השם, שהיא שמחה לו.

Upon receiving good news that is for one's benefit alone, he blesses *Shehecheyanu* – He gave us life, and He sustained us and He let us reach this time. If there is benefit for him and for others he blesses, *HaTov V'Ha'Meitiv* – He is good and He does good for others.

Upon receiving bad news, he blesses, 'Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, King of the Universe, the Judge of truth.

A person is obligated to say the blessing upon receiving bad news with complete clarity and a desirous soul just like he says a blessing with happiness upon receiving good news. That is because bad things for those who serve Hashem is their happiness and their good – when a person accepts with love that which Hashem has decreed upon him the result is that by accepting this bad news he is serving G-d and that brings happiness for him.

Mishnah Brurah to s'if 3 writes:

כדרך שמברך וכו' - כי באמת כל היסורין בין בגוף ובין בממון הוא הכל כפרה על העונות כדי שלא יצטרך להתיסר לעתיד לבוא ששם העונש הוא הרבה יותר גדול...

Just like he says a blessing – Because in truth all the suffering that a person experiences, whether physically or fiscally serves as atonement for one's sins so that he will not be afflicted in Olom HaBo because there the punishment is much greater...

The Halachah does not teach us that 'bad' is 'good'. 'Bad' is 'bad' and the grief that comes with it cannot be denied. However, the Halachah does teach a perspective on the 'bad' that allows the 'עובד ה' to recite the blessing with a fullness of *kavanah*.

We read two applications of this principle in the following s'if there:

מברך על הטובה: הטוב והמטיב אף על פי שירא שמא יבא לו רעה ממנו, כגון שמצא מציאה וירא שמא ישמע למלך ויקח כל אשר לו, וכן מברך על הרעה: ברוך דיין האמת אף על פי שיבא לו טובה ממנו, כגון שבא לו שטף על שדהו אף על פי שכשיעבור השטף היא טובה לו, שהשקה שדהו.

A person recites *HaTov V'HaMeitiv* even if he is concerned that something bad will come from the good. For example, a person finds something of value¹ [and keeps it] and he is afraid that the king may hear about it and confiscate all of his property.

¹ Mishnah B'rurah explains that the case here is when others will benefit with him – that is why he says *HaTov V'HaMeitiv* and not *Shehecheyanu*.

Similarly, he recites *Boruch Dayan HoEmes* on that which is bad even though there may be good that will result. For example, the river overflows and floods his field even though when the flooding ceases it is good for him because it watered his field.

And, in the following Siman, Shulchan Aruch brings a far more extreme case, one that certainly seems disconcerting. We read (223/s'if 2):

מת אביו מברך: דיין האמת; היה לו ממון שירשו, אם אין לו אחים מברך גם כן:
שהחיינו; ואם יש לו אחים במקום שהחיינו מברך: הטוב והמטיב. הגה: שאין
מברכין הטוב והמטיב אלא אם כן יש לו שותפות באותה טובה:

If his father died, he recites *Dayan HoEmes*. If he inherited money from him – if he has no brothers² he also recites *Shehecheyanu*; if he has brothers, instead of *Shehecheyanu* he recites *HaTov V'HaMeitiv*.

Ramo – you only recite *HaTov V'HaMeitiv* when others share in that goodness.

Mishnah B'rurah is quite aware of the internal conflict of one who must recite blessings of thanksgiving together with *Dayan HoEmes*. He writes (s'if koton 9):

גם כן שהחיינו -...ואף דיותר היה מתרצה שלא ימות אביו ולא יירשנו מכל מקום
יכול לברך שהחיינו דאין ברכה זו תלויה בשמחה אלא בדבר שמגיע לו תועלת ממנו
ואף על פי שמתערב עמה צער ואנחה [תשובות הרשב"א סימן רמ"ה]:

Also Shehecheyanu – even though he would have been more pleased had his father not died and thus would not have received an inheritance, nonetheless he may recite *Shehecheyanu* – because this blessing is not dependent on happiness but on that which is beneficial – even if it is mixed with pain and sorrow. [Sheilos UT'shuvos Rashbo 245].

Thus, mixed emotions are not necessarily a sign of emotional disturbance. The contrary is true: only a person with a large *neshamah* can recite these two paradoxical blessings with the proper *kavanah* for each.

² Or other immediate family members who will benefit directly from the inheritance – Mishnah B'rurah.

All of the above may serve as an appropriate introduction to an easily misunderstood section at the beginning of our Parshas Yisro.

Yisro is a venerated person³.

³ See however, *Targum Yonoson* to the opening verse of our Parsha. That Posuk reads (Sh'mos Perek 1/Posuk 1):

וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוֹ כֹהֵן מִדְיָן חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ כִּי הוֹצִיא ה' אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם:

Yisro, the *kohen* of Midian, the father in-law of Moshe, heard all that G-d did for Moshe and for Israel – that He took Israel from Egypt.

Targum Onkelos renders the words *kohen Midian* literally:

רבא דמדין

The leader of Midian since a *kohen* is a person who holds high office [see Rashi to Sh'muel II Perek 8/Posuk 18).

In Targum Yonoson, the words are:

אונוס מדין

What does this word *onos* mean?

See *Yayin HaTov* (note 26) on the Targumim to Sh'mos Perek 2/Posuk 16. The verse there reads:

וּלְכֹהֵן מִדְיָן שִׁבְעַת בָּנוֹת וַתָּבֹאוּ וַתִּדְלְגוּ וַתִּמְלְאוּ אֶת הָרְהָטִים לְהַשְׁקוֹת צֹאן אֲבִיהֶן:

The Kohen of Midian had seven daughters and they came and they brought up water and they filled the water troughs to give water to the sheep of their father.

There, Targum Yonoson renders the words *וּלְכֹהֵן מִדְיָן*:

וּלְאוֹנִיס דְּמִדְיָן

The word *onos* means 'donkey' and thus the verse is speaking about Yisro in a pejorative manner. *Onis* means ruler and thus the rendition is similar to that of Onkelos.

Citing the *rishon* 'Oruch', the *Yayin HaTov* wishes to suggest that Targum Yonoson deliberately chose a term that was a double entendre.

It would seem that the explanation for this double entendre, on the one hand recognizing Yisro as an important personage and on the other as a 'donkey' is that the Torah did not want to provide Yisro with unadulterated praise when he served as a religious leader of idolatry. We read in Masseches Megillah:

Already at the very beginning of our Parsha, Rashi shares with us some of the praise due this great person. He writes:

יתרו - שבע שמות נקראו לו...יתר, על שם שיתר פרשה אחת בתורה (להלן פסוק כא) ואתה תחזה. יתרו לכשנתגייר וקיים המצות הוסיפו לו אות אחת על שמו. חובב שחבב את התורה.

Yisro – Yisro was called by seven names...*Yeser* because he added an extra portion to the Torah – ‘You should look for [judges]. *Yisro*-when he converted and fulfilled Mitzvos they added one letter to his name. *Chovov* - because he loved Torah.

But, even without this commentary of Rashi we could appreciate Yisro’s uniqueness.

How are we introduced to Yisro in our Parsha? The opening verse (Perek 18/Posuk 1) reads:

וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוֹ כֹּהֵן מִדְיָן חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ
כִּי הוֹצִיא ה' אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם:

Yisro, the *Kohen* of Midian, the father in-law of Moshe, heard all that G-d did for Moshe and for Israel His nation – that He took Israel from Egypt.

What did Yisro hear?

Rashi selects part of the Midrash and writes:

וישמע יתרו - מה שמועה שמע ובא, קריעת ים סוף ומלחמת עמלק:
Yisro heard – What report did he hear and then came? He heard regarding the splitting of the Red Sea and the war against Amalek.

אמר רב נחמן: כל ליצנותא אסירא בר מליצנותא דעבודה זרה דשריא,
Rav Nachman said, ‘All mockery is forbidden with the exception of mocking idolatry which is permitted.

Thus, possibly, Targum Yonoson employed a term that would, on the one hand, faithfully express the high position that Yisro held in Midian and, on the other hand, convey the Torah’s derision for that central position in the world of idolatry.

The Torah tells us that Yisro heard some of the great events that occurred to Israel. But, surely, he was not the only one who heard that momentous information that certainly sent shock waves throughout the entire world.

Rashi is interested in teaching us

מה שמועה שמע ובא

What report did he hear and then came?

Yisro heard about the events and didn't revert to his previous lifestyle. He came! He changed his life; he was a man of extraordinary courage. Where the rest of the world knew that cataclysmic events occurred –and then put their import aside, Yisro understood the ramifications of those events and acted upon them.

So, where is the confusion?

Moshe tells Yisro details regarding the general reports of the events that he heard. We read (Posuk 8):

וַיְסַפֵּר מֹשֶׁה לְחֹתְנוֹ אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' לְפָרְעֹה וּלְמִצְרַיִם עַל אֹדֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל הַתְּלָאָה אֲשֶׁר מָצְאתֶם בְּדַרְךְ וַיִּצְלַם ה':

Moshe told his father-in-law all that Hashem did to Par'o and to Egypt, because of Israel, and all of the weariness that found them on the way and that Hashem saved them.

The Torah immediately tells us Yisro's reaction. We read (Posuk 9):

וַיִּחַד יִתְרוֹ עַל כָּל הַטּוֹבָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר הִצִּילוּ מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם:

Vayichad- Yisro was happy about all of the good that Hashem did for Israel; that he saved them from the hand of Egypt.

We wrote *vayichad* in the translation here because the exact and precise rendition is open to question.

We translated *vayichad* as 'he was happy' because that is how Onkelos renders it- וַחֲדִי.

Like the word *חַדָּי*, happiness, with which we are probably more familiar, *ויחד* means 'he was happy'. Yisro was happy as he discovered more about the events that brought him to the camp of Israel.

However, as *Or HaChaim HaKodosh* points out, if all the Torah meant to convey was that Yisro was happy, the Torah could have written the term for happiness with a more common word, such as *וישמח* which is immediately recognizable.

Why did the Torah choose an unusual term to convey Yisro's elation?

Rashi tells us that there are two explanations for *ויחד* and they do not mean the same at all.

He writes:

ויחד יתרו - וישמח יתרו, זהו פשוטו ומדרשו נעשה בשרו חדודין חדודין, מיצר על איבוד מצרים, היינו דאמרי אינשי גיורא עד עשרה דרי לא תבזי ארמאה באפיה:

Vayichad Yisro – Yisro was happy. That is the *p'shat*. The Midrash of these words is – Yisro's flesh became painful, as if it was pricked by thorns. He suffered over the loss of Egypt and that is what people say, 'A convert, until ten generations, do not talk badly about non-Jews before him'⁴.

At initial consideration, it certainly seems that these two explanations, the verse's *p'shat* and its *midrash* are polar opposites. If Yisro was happy he was not sad. If he suffered he could not have been happy.

However, it is not wise to jump to conclusions even when considering this commentary of Rashi which seems to be so straightforward.

If we consider the first verse of the Parsha and the selections from the Midrash that Rashi brings, we are in a quandary regarding the Midrash in our verse. We read:

⁴ The first explanation, the *p'shat* also has to deal with this unexpected term of *ויחד* that means that which is prickly.

Perhaps it would mean that Yisro was so thrilled that he had what we call 'goosebumps'.

מה שמועה שמע ובא, קריעת ים סוף ומלחמת עמלק:
Yisro heard – What report did he hear and then came? He heard regarding the splitting of the Red Sea and the war against Amalek.

How can it be that Yisro heard about the great miracles that Hashem performed for Israel, at the expense of Egypt and Amalek, and yet feel suffering at their loss?

We have here an example of ‘mixed emotions’ that are not a sign of mental disturbance, but rather are a sign of mental health, mental stability, courage and the reign of rational judgment over the feelings, sentiments and passions that have their place within us, but are not to rule over us.

We have here a living example of what we learned in Shulchan Aruch above. There are times when we are called upon to say two b’rachos consecutively, with feeling, with meaning and dedication: *Dayan HoEmes* when there is loss and *HaTov V’HaMeitiv* for the benefit that is concurrent with that loss

Yisro heard that Egypt was decimated and that Amalek were terribly weakened.

Regarding the Egyptians the Torah writes (Sh’mos Perek 14/Posuk 28):

וַיָּשְׁבוּ הַיָּמִים וַיָּכֹסוּ אֶת הָרֶכֶב וְאֶת הַפָּרָשִׁים לְכָל חֵיל פְּרָעָה הַבָּאִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם בַּיּוֹם לֹא נִשְׁאַר בָּהֶם עַד אֶחָד:

The waters returned and they covered the chariots and the horsemen and all the army of Par’o who were coming after them into the sea; not one of them remained.

Regarding Amalek the Torah writes (Perek 17/Posuk 13):

וַיַּחֲלֹשׁ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת עַמְלֵק וְאֶת עַמּוֹ לְפִי חֶרֶב:

Yehoshua weakened Amalek and his people by the sword.

Yes, Yisro felt a kinship with at least some of these peoples. They were part of *B’nei Noach* of which he was a member. There was a closeness in his heart to those peoples that was deeply embedded. Yet, the awareness of right and wrong that was even more deeply embedded in Yisro brought him to the decision to come to the camp of Israel.

As we explore this greatness that Yisro displayed, as we marvel at the depth of his character, we can now understand an additional⁵ Midrash, one that Rashi did not bring.

We read (Midrash Tanchuma Yisro Parshata 5):

ויחד יתרו שיחד שמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא. דבר אחר ויחד יתרו, שנעשה יהודי...
Vayichad Yisro – He accepted the Oneness of Hashem. Another explanation is that he became a *Yehudi*⁶, he converted to Judaism.

Until now we have seen three easy to understand explanations of *va'yichad*: *chadi* – meaning happy; *chiddudim* – prickly thorns; *yichud Hashem* accepting the Name of Hashem as *Echod*.

This new explanation that *va'yichad* is similar to *va'yihad*⁷ – he became a Jew requires the letter *ches* in the word *va'yichad* to be read as the letter *heh*.

In fact, part of the nature of *L'shon HaKodesh* is the phenomenon of אותיות מתחלפות, interchangeable letters.

Letters that are formed in the same place in the mouth are interchangeable in *L'shon HaKodesh*. See for example Rashi to Vayikro (Perek 19/Posuk 16) who writes:

שכל האותיות שמוצאיהם ממקום אחד מתחלפות זו בזו

All letters that are produced from one place are interchangeable.

⁵ The Midrash brings what follows as two ideas. However, we will follow *Ba'al HaTurim* who treats the two ideas as one.

⁶ In fact, we find the term *Yehudi* referring to Am Yisroel much later- at the time of Bayis Sheini.

⁷ There is a verb form of becoming a Jew as we read in Megillas Esther (Perek 8/Posuk 17):

ובְּכָל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל עִיר וְעִיר מִקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָּבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וַדָּתוֹ מִגִּיעַ שְׂמֵחָה וְשִׂשׂוֹן לַיהוּדִים
מִשְׁתָּה יוֹם טוֹב וְרַבִּים מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ מִתְיַהֲדִים כִּי נָפַל פַּחַד הַיְהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם:

In each and every state and in each and every city, places where the word of the king and his law reached, there was happiness and joy for the Jews, parties and holidays; many of the peoples of those places became Jewish because the fear of the Jews was upon them.

With specific regard to the letters *ches* and *heh* being interchangeable, we read in *Parshas Sotah* (B'mibar Perek 5/Posuk 19):

וְהִשְׁבִּיעַ אֹתָהּ הַכֹּהֵן וְאָמַר אֶל הָאִשָּׁה אִם לֹא שָׁכַב אִישׁ אִתְּךָ וְאִם לֹא שָׁטִית טְמֵאָה
תַּחַת אִישׁ הַנָּקִי מִמֵּי הַמָּרִים הַמְאָרְרִים הָאֵלֶּה:

The Kohen will administer an oath to her and he will say to the woman, 'If a man did not lay with you and if you did not deviate to bring impurity instead of being with your husband, *hi'no'ki* –you will be innocent from these cursing bitter waters.

Rashi writes:

והשביע אותה וגו' - ומה היא השבועה אם לא שכב הנקי, הא אם שכב חנקי...
He administers an oath to her – What is the oath? 'If you did not lay with another man, *hi'no'ki* – you will be innocent. But if you did, *chi'no'ki* –you will choke [on the waters].

As the *Mizrachi* writes in his commentary on Rashi:

ופירשו אותו מענין חנק, אף על פי שהוא בה"א, כי ה"ה"א והח"י"ת מתחלפות:

The explanation is that it comes from the word *che'nek* –choking. And even though the word *hi'no'ki* is with the letter *heh*, the letters *heh* and *ches* interchange.

If we would view Yisro as a disturbed person, beset by conflicting emotions, an individual who doesn't know if he should be in personal sorrow at one extreme or join together with those who caused that sorrow at the other extreme, then we could view him as being quite unhealthy.

However, Yisro is a hero and if we are able to interpret this multiplicity of explanations as a whole, then our admiration for this heroism will only grow.

Yisro did have mixed emotions. He was sad at the death of his compatriots at the time of the Exodus [and perhaps for Amalek as well⁸]. That sadness could not have begun with his arrival into the camp of Israel because he already knew about the Egyptian defeat prior to that arrival.

⁸ The family of Yisro, the *Keini*, was a geographical neighbor with Amalek. See Rashi to B'mibar Perek 24/Posuk 21).

Perhaps, that sadness became deeper when Yisro heard specific details about the Exodus and the fall of Egypt that he did not know earlier.

Yet, Yisro came to the camp of Israel. Despite the sadness that he felt, Yisro made a choice. He left his homeland and pledged his plight with Israel.

How different Yisro was from the *Eirev Rav*, the Egyptians who left their land to accompany Israel at the Exodus. The latter were fortune hunters, betting on the side that they thought was winning.

They had no loyalty, no joy. They were only seeking their own physical and financial benefit. That is why, at least according to Rashi, the *Eirav Rav* were the instigators of the sin of *Eigel HaZahav*⁹.

Yisro was not a fortune hunter. He went out to the wilderness¹⁰, away from civilization. He could not have expected to receive a portion of Eretz Yisroel as an inheritance; he was not among those who left the land.

He had to wrestle with his feelings. He *knew* that G-d was right but he *felt* sad. What would triumph – his feelings or his intellect? The answer is clear. He heard and he came.

Yisro's judgment overcame his feelings and he became a hero.

However, Yisro's heroism did not end with '*va'yichad*' becoming happiness despite the '*va'yichad*' of pain.

Yisro was aware of the consequences of his decision and would not stop in the middle.

If the intellect of Yisro led him to the conclusion that what occurred at the Exodus and the other events was correct, despite his personal pain, then his conclusion was another *va'yichad* – he could not ignore that the fact that Hashem Echod – there is only One G-d.

⁹ See his commentary to Sh'mos Perek 32/Posuk 4.

¹⁰ Sh'mos Perek 18/Posuk 5.

But, Yisro's heroism did not even stop there. He could have been satisfied with being one of the חסידי אומות העולם, the righteous of the nations.

Rambam writes in Hilchos Melachim (Perek 8/Halachah 11):

כל המקבל שבע מצות ונזהר לעשותן הרי זה מחסידי אומות העולם, ויש לו חלק לעולם הבא, והוא שיקבל אותן ויעשה אותן מפני שצוה בהן הקדוש ברוך הוא בתורה והודיענו על ידי משה רבינו שבני נח מקודם נצטוו בהן, אבל אם עשאו מפני הכרע הדעת אין זה גר תושב ואינו מחסידי אומות העולם ולא מחכמיהם.

One who accepts upon himself the Seven Noachide Laws and is careful to do them – he is among the Righteous of the Nations of the World and has a portion in the World to Come. This applies when he does them because Hashem commanded them in the Torah and informed us through Moshe Rabbenu that Noachides were already commanded to do them.

But, if he does them because his intellect convinced him, he is not a *ger toshav*¹¹ and not among the Righteous of the Nations of the World and not among their wise men.

Yisro easily met this standard. Undoubtedly he would have remained a personage of high stature, admired and honored by all of Israel. His story would have been told for generations had he decided to stop there; he was a hero.

But, the intellectual honesty of Yisro was not satisfied. To such a fine degree was that honesty honed, he would not settle for anything less than the ideal which was to become a Jew and, thus, he adopted an earlier Halachah of the Rambam (ibid. Halachah 10):

משה רבינו לא הנחיל התורה והמצות אלא לישראל, שנאמר (דברים לג/ד)¹² מורשה קהלת יעקב, ולכל הרוצה להתגייר משאר האומות, שנאמר (במדבר טו/טו)¹³ ככם כגר...

¹¹ A *ger toshav* is a non-Jew who lives in Eretz Yisroel and observes the Seven Noachide Laws. He has a special status, above that of non-Jews who reside in Eretz Yisroel and who do not observe the Seven Noachide Laws.

¹² The complete verse reads:

תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב:

Moshe Rabbenu gave the Torah and Mitzvos as an exclusive inheritance to Israel alone as it says, 'an inheritance to the Congregation of Israel' and to all who wish to convert from the other nations, as it says, 'like you, like the convert'...

When we read Parshas Yisro without these insights, when we read the *Mussar* that Yisro gives to Moshe Rabbenu Olov HaShalom in the section that he, Yisro, added, we may be taken aback by what appears to be brashness in telling Moshe what to do.

Who is Yisro to instruct Moshe Rabbenu? From where does he come to be so presumptuous?

Is Moshe's seeming acceptance of Yisro's words just another indication of Moshe's modesty and forbearance?

The answer is that Moshe knew that which we have now discovered. Yisro was a towering giant. He sets an example for all of us. Moshe knew that his father-in-law was a giant and thus his words were worthy of attention.

Does it sometimes seem strange that the Parsha of Mattan Torah bears the name of Yisro? If it has in the past, it should no longer be so.

Yisro set the pattern of free-choice, one who left the home that he knew, and *chose* to be part of Israel.

Within Yisro, all the facets of *va'yichad* came into play; they were all there. That there is a multiplicity of feelings and thoughts is not so remarkable. Most of us at times also face many ideas and feelings that are paradoxical or even contradictory.

Moshe commanded the Torah to us; an inheritance for the Congregation of Israel.

¹³ The complete verse reads:

הַקְּהָל חֻקָּה אַחַת לָכֶם וְלִגֵּר הַגֵּר חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם כְּכֶם כִּגְר יְהִיָּה לִפְנֵי ה'.

The congregation – one statute for you and for the convert who converts, an eternal statute for your generations, like for you and like for the convert it will be before G-d.

That which made Yisro remarkable was that he took charge of himself, his emotions and his thoughts and he set his priorities; he decided what was right and he acted on it to his fullest.

Parshas Yisro is the Parsha of Mattan Torah because Yisro accepted the Torah and set an everlasting example for us to let our knowledge of right and wrong, of *emes* and *sheker* overcome all and give us the courage to decide that which is right and that which is *emes* to fulfill the Torah's mandate at *Mattan Torah* (Perek 19/Posuk 6):

וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מִמְּלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תִּדְבֹּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

You shall be unto Me a kingdom of Kohanim and a holy nation; these are the words that you Moshe should speak to B'nei Yisroel.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock