

February 10, 2023

This week's Parashah is Yitro. In this parashah Hashem passes the law to the people. I'm certain you have all memorized and followed all of the commandments. For me, I have a vivid memory of Charlton Heston crawling around a burning bush that is not consumed by the fire, while the finger of God carves the commandments into stone. Admit, you've all gotten a stick and stood before the imaginary people in your brains and pretended to burn the commandments into your minds and hearts. Since we have Bruce Rogow here, dealing with the law . . . such as it is . . . I have decided in addressing this parashah I would focus on what I believe to be the seminal lesson of this portion.

In the play *Bye Bye Birdie*, Dick Van Dykes' mother opens an oven, sticks her head into it, and yells heavenward, "Take me." Well, Moses didn't have an oven. (Though the Suez peninsula can be pretty hot.) No, Moses had a similar situation. Every problem that the people had, came to Moses. I supervise about 70 or so people at school and sometimes that can feel, even on a good day, like herding cats. That's not a complaint, just an observation.

The bottom line is that Moses was constantly burdened with adjudicating grievances of all sorts. And with hundreds of thousands of people and a new set of laws, it was all too much. So, Yitro suggested that Moses appoint judges to help relieve the pressure on him. Moses liked the idea and then the next problem was who would hear which sorts of cases.

The genius of the decision was that Moses was going to hear only the most important cases. So, if we're talking about tobacco settlements in Florida . . . a big expensive money case would be for Moses. A fender bender between a couple of camels would be for the lower courts. Probably a poor analogy, but work with me.

Moses says, no to that. He makes a decision for the ages. The size and wealth of the aggrieved would have nothing to do with who makes decisions. No, Moses would hear, rich or poor, the cases that were most complex. (I'm certain that in reality tobacco litigation was very complex.) The point is, that money wouldn't decide who gets a case in front of Moses. Anyone could be heard by the highest arbiter of his time – the John Roberts and Supreme Court of Moses' time would

be blind to wealth and power. The lower courts would hear the less complicated matters.

This was the beginning of blind justice . . . this was a judge and court anyone could appear in front of.

Last week I got to be a judge as a school administrator! One second grade girl and one fifth grade girl sat in the back of a school bus. The second grader thought it would be entertaining to remove the bun from the head of the fifth grader. So, she did exactly that. The fifth grader took exception. She grabbed the second grader, threw her over a seat on the bus, then grabbed her head and smashed it on the floor of the bus. The bus driver took the case to a higher court, Judge Dredd Bossert. You can speculate on the way I handled that – a four hours of a day, I will never get back again. Well, I'm out of time, but I'm sure you get the principal / principle – LE of Moses Courts.

So, instead of the proposed topic of Mr. Rogow's talk – some color blind stuff, he and I will choose either a fifth grader or the second grader and we will address this and weightier matters later.

Bottom line . . . Moses developed a formal system of courts. I think that's pretty darned important.