



WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

Women's League Shabbat 2014/5774

D'var Torah for Parashat Yitro

Family – *Mishpachah*.

Each family is different. Some are circles of close friends, some stretch across oceans, some are individuals living alone, some include grandchildren, nieces, nephews. Some are the “traditional” model of parents with children. Whatever our family looks like, we are fortunate if someone in our family can be a mentor to us, giving us advice when we truly need it.

Moshe was a truly fortunate. His father-in-law, Yitro, gave good counsel. When he found out that the Israelites had left Egypt, Yitro brought his daughter and grandsons to reunite with Moshe as a family. But he didn't stop there.

After watching his son-in-law sit as magistrate all day long, he said to Moshe, “*What is this thing that you are doing to the people? Why do you act alone, while all the people stand about you from morning until evening?*” (Exodus 18:14) He told Moshe the blunt truth: “*The thing you are doing is not good - lo tov; you will surely wear yourself out, and these people as well...you cannot do it alone.*” (Exodus 18: 17-18)

He further counseled Moshe to choose capable people to assist him, people who fear God, who are trustworthy, who spurn ill-gotten gain. He encouraged Moshe to develop leaders among his people. He encouraged him to share the workload. Sharing the tasks would leave Moshe “able to bear up” and all the people would also “go home unwearied.” (Exodus 18: 21)

How fortunate Moshe was to have a father-in-law who could give him such sage wisdom that is still relevant today. We all need to recognize that in our synagogue and Sisterhood families, as well as our own families, when tasks are shared no one feels overly burdened, everyone completes the work more easily and, hopefully more happily, and no one feels alone. Yitro's understanding is as true today as it was then: when families work together no task is too difficult.

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