



# דרכים בפרשה

יתרו



וישמע יתרו

*And Yisro heard*

**מה שמועה שמע ובא, קריעת ים סוף ומלחמת עמלק -** *What did he hear? He heard about Krias Yam Suf and the war with Amalek*

Yisro heard about two events: Krias Yam Suf and Milchemes Amalek. Why did Yisro need two incidents to impress upon him the greatness of HaShem and His People? Shouldn't Krias Yam Suf have been enough of a *nes* to influence his way of thinking? Furthermore, the order in which Yisro heard of these events was first Krias Yam Suf and after that Milchemes Amalek. Had he first heard of Milchemes Amalek, it could have been misinterpreted as a victory affected by Klal Yisrael's military genius. Or perhaps, one may surmise that Amalek came to the battle unprepared thus scoring the underdog Bnai Yisroel a victory. Therefore, the battle alone may have been inconclusive enough to convince Yisro to join, thus requiring the second event of Krias Yam Suf. However, the order was in fact first Krias Yam Suf which was a *nes* of the highest level. No one could question it. Why then was it necessary for Yisro to also hear about the war with Amalek before he decided to join Klal Yisrael?

We can suggest the following answer:

*Lehavdil*, let us imagine a visit to the Mensa International High-IQ society. As a result of

"having some pull", an offer is made to join. Completely blown away by the sheer genius displayed by one and all, and all excited about the exciting prospect of belonging to such an elite institution, it would be very tempting to say "yes". But then they bring out one of their regular members. He begins to talk so quickly and so brilliantly on a level that the average Yossel just cannot understand. As exciting as it would be to join, there is no point because the distance is much too great.

Yisro already wanted to join *Klal Yisroel* after *Krias Yam Suf*. After all, the love that HaShem displayed to His children in those *nissim* demonstrated clearly that they were the *am hanivchar*. Even the lowliest maiden saw during *Krias Yam Suf* what the great *navi*, Yechezkel Ben Buzi, did not see. Who would not want to join such a nation? This however caused Yisro to rethink if he was even worthy of joining. Perhaps the distance between the lowest Jew at that time and the most exalted gentile was so great that he would not be able to make the leap.

But then came *Milchemes Amalek*. Of what purpose was his attack? *Amalek* knew that he could not win. However, he could at least "cool" them off. The *seforim* tell us that Amalek and *safek* have the same *gematria*

of 240. Amalek's campaign against us was to create doubt. Amalek did not care if he was starting up with the highest echelons of Klal Yisroel or the lowest of the low. In fact, his first targets were the ones that lagged behind. It was an all-out battle with every last member and rank.

After Yisro saw that even on the highest level there was still a need to battle the advances of Amalek, a.k.a. a person's *yetzer hara*, he realized that the great lofty level of a Jewish person is not at all due to the absence of the *yetzer hara*. On the contrary, it is the ability and willingness to constantly fight and conquer it. Now Yisro was ready to join!

The *Gemara* in *Mesechta Sanhedrin* tells us that if Reuvein is told to kill or get killed, Reuvein would not be allowed to save his own life, because of the logic of **מאי חזית דדמך סומך טפי**. Do we really know whose blood is redder, which person is more valuable in HaShem's eyes? The same logic holds true even if the two parties involved were the *gadol hador* and a lowly robber or murderer. But why is it so?

Let us examine the *tzaddik*. He may have been born to an important family. His path may have been carved out for him. Born on rung 91 of the ladder, today he is standing high atop rung 97; it can't get much better than that. But what of the robber sitting all the way on the bottom of the ladder at 23? He was born into a situation where there was never any hope that he would amount to much of anything. He was born on rung 6. Yes, the *tzaddik* is much higher up, but the robber has climbed many more rungs.

We can never really know whose blood is redder.

It was pointed out to me that in *Sefer Tanya* (ch.27), he quotes from the *Zohar* that the greatest *nachas* to Hashem is in the struggle, as opposed to someone who has already reached, or was born with, righteousness. These struggles are even more pleasing to Hashem than the great *avoda* of a *Tzaddik*.

The Kotzker Rebbe (Yahrtzeit 22 Shevat) expounded upon the possuk, **ויחן שם ישראל** -נגד ההר - *and they camped opposite the mountain* as follows: the word **ויחן** has in it the word *chein*. The Rebbe explained that the time which one can find *chein* is during those moments when there is *neged* happening, i.e. when the *Yeitzer Hara* is trying to drive us in the wrong direction. When there is a struggle to do the right thing, at that moment specifically there is an incredible opportunity to accumulate *chein*.

It was after *Milchemes Amalek* that Yisro came to the realization that it's not how high up one is, but the willingness to keep on fighting and rising, and that, he was indeed willing to do!

**מרדכי אפפּעל, Good Shabbos**



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