

Rabbi Aharon Ziegler Yitro 5780

TUESDAY, FEB 18, IS THE 23RD OF SHEVAT. WHICH IS THE YAHRZEIT OF MY FATHER-IN-LAW, MAX LEWKO, MORDECHAI BEN SHLOMO, A" H, A MAN OF MANY VIRTUOUS, ESPECIALLY FOR RELIGIOUS ZIONISM. This Dvar Torah is designated in his memory. May it be a blessing for all of us.

Yitro heard about the great events that occurred to Bnei Yisrael and came. This is the chapter that immediately precedes the giving of the Torah. The war with Amalek is also recorded immediately prior to Matan Torah. Why are these two incidents a prologue to Matan Torah?

Rav Soloveitchik suggested, that Yitro was a prominent gentile; he was the Archbishop of Midian. He came to the Jewish camp with an open mind. He wanted to observe for himself what the Jews had accomplished and were about to engage in. He was so overwhelmed by their conduct that he renounced paganism and embraced Judaism. He is never described as a saintly gentile, rather, he is portrayed as a decent person, whose positive reaction should have been emulated by other gentiles who witnessed the exhibition of Matan Torah.

The Amaleikites were also impressed with the Jews, but their reaction differed from that of Yitro. They believed that a nation who follows different laws from those which prevailed all over the world, is a menace to society and should be exterminated. Amalek came and attacked the Jews. The Jews had not threatened Amalek in any manner, yet Amalek attacked them anyway. This was their reaction to Matan Torah.

In the Torah, the presentation of the first set of Luchot given to Israel at Mt. Sinai, was with tremendous fanfare. In the Machzor of Rosh HaShana, we read in the section of Shofarot, "With voices and thunder You revealed Yourself to them and through the sound of a Shofar did You appear to them". GD wanted the entire world to know that the Jews had received the Torah, and that the Torah contained a new moral code, a new outlook, and a new set of laws. It was not necessary for all the other nations to accept this code. It was however, crucial that they be aware of it. Why? So that GD could eventually convert the entire universe to become the residence of HaShem. All will accept the reign of GD. The time will come when the whole world will realize that the Torah given to the Jews contain the truth, and it is worthwhile to accept them-just as the Jews accepted them so many years ago. The purpose of Matan Torah was not for the individual, but to convert the entire universe into a divine residence. The Torah was offered to everyone, and must eventually be accepted by everyone.

The Torah, however, also wants us to know that there are certain people who will never be converted. They understand that the Jew represents something unique, but their response to that is vicious hatred and a desire to destroy. Amalek attacked us without provocation and

for no reason, other than that we are a unique and separate entity. Amalek and their descendants will continue to react this way throughout history.

The gentiles will react to us in one of two ways, either as Yitro or as Amalek, and we must be prepared for both reactions.

Shabbat Shalom, from YERUSHALAYIM, ISRAEL Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT YITRO:

1- Yitro, the father in law of Moshe, had 6 other names. Can you name any or all?

2-IN 20:10 we read:” ...The seventh day is Shabbat to HaShem, you shall not do any melacha-YOU, YOUR SON, YOUR DAUGHTER...”. The “YOU” refers to every Jewish adult. So to whom is GD referring by stating “your son, Your daughter”?? It cannot be that GD is addressing the children!

3-In 18:22 –Yitro suggests: “They shall judge the people at all times, and they shall bring every major matter to you”. When Moshe implements this advice he changes one word. What did he change and what is the significance of that change ?

4-Our ancestors went through a process of “conversion” at Har Sinai. Conversion requires immersion in a Mikveh. Where is it stated that before The Revelation they did indeed immerse themselves?

5-On 20:15- “The entire people saw the thunder..they heard the sound of Shofar, they stood , they spoke”. Is it not possible that some of the people were blind and could not see, that some were deaf and could not hear, that some could not stand or speak? So how could the Torah state that they all saw, heard, stood and spoke???

6-In our parasha it is written (20:12) “KABEID Et Avicha Ve’et Imecha” [Honor your father and mother] and in Vayikra 19:3, it is written, “Ish Imoh VeAviv Tira’uh” You must show awe [respect]for mother and father. What is the halachik difference between “Respect”and “awe”?