



PhiloTorah D'var Torah

Yitro - the Missing Piece

In the third month of the children of Israel's departure from Egypt, on this day they arrived in the desert of Sinai. They (plural) journeyed from Refidim, and they (plural) arrived in the desert of Sinai, and they (plural) encamped in the desert, and Israel (singular) encamped there opposite the mountain.

Rashi's well-known statement - And he (Israel) camped opposite the mountain? Yes, as one person with one heart.

A unity of the highest order, sadly never reached ever since.

But at that moment when they arrived at Har Sinai, they were totally unified.

This is the explanation of the statement in the DAYEINU poem of the Hagada - If He had brought us to Har Sinai but hadn't given us the Torah - DAYEINU, there would be sufficient reason for us to be grateful to G-d.

The question is obvious. The purpose of bringing us to Har Sinai was to give us the Torah. So how does this statement of DAYEINU make sense?

Some suggest that it was that special experience of unity which gave us sufficient grounds to thank HKBH, even without taking Matan Torah into account.

All good and fine.

But there is one thing missing (perhaps).

Each person's individual identity. Being part of a large, very large group - being so unified and harmonized for something as great as Maamad Har Sinai, is amazing. Is wonderful. But what about each member of that group. Does one forfeit or yield one's individuality in such a situation?

I think that would be sad (for lack of a better word).

Enter Yitro. An individual who came to the Jewish People as an individual, in order to receive the Torah.

He is the missing piece to complete the whole picture of MATAN TORAH.

Each and every one of us needs to be an integral part of AM YISRAEL - AND - an individual, dedicated to a life of Torah and Mitzvot, Chessed and Yir'at Shamayim.

The repetition of the Amida - CHAZARAT HASHATZ, shows this point well. We each daven as one-on-one with HKBH. Silently and technically alone, symbolized by our three steps forward. Then we step back and

rejoin the TZIBUR, as the Baal T'fila repeats the Amida for all of us as a Tzibur, who answer AMEIN to each of his b'rachot - united in our service of HaShem.

That's how it is with davening, that's how it should be with all that we do - maintain the balance and partnership of our being individual Jews and of our being part of AM YISRAEL.

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