

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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B'HA-ALO-T'CHA

The first ten chapters of the Book of Bamidbar seem to be preparations of a good leader in helping his people reach their apex. Yet, a strange story takes place. In Bamidbar 10:29-34, Moshe calls out to Chovav, another name for his father-in-law, and says to him - We are heading to the Promised Land and G-d will be good to us. Come with us and share in the goodness. Yitro, former Midian priest, now converted to Judaism, reflexes a moment and decides not to join the Jewish people. Instead, Yitro goes back to his homeland. Moshe redoubles his efforts and pleads with Yitro - "Do not leave us, for you know what goes in our encampments in the desert, and you can be our eyes." Yitro seems to agree with Moshe and joins in the journey.

Why was Moshe trying so hard to convince Yitro to come? What did he want his father-in-law to do? It almost sounds like Moshe needed an extra pair of eyes for something important. Perhaps he needed a tour guide or a pathfinder.

I once read a very nice insight that Moshe's intentions were quite differ-

ent. Until now, all the Jewish people experienced the revelation of Mount Sinai. They accepted the Torah as G-d's gift to them. However, did they really accept it with their free will? With such a mass experience at Mount Sinai, how could they disagree or say otherwise?

Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law was the only convert at the time. He was the only one who had the choice of his own to join and identify with the Jewish people. From earlier text, we read about Yitro as an intellectual, deeply spiritual and gentle person. He thought through well what he had seen and heard and concluded that there is one G-d and that is the G-d of Israel. Having made this decision on his own, Moshe seems to feel he can have a positive influence on Israel and share with them the logical reasons why others should choose to follow G-d, as he had done.

This idea seen threaded throughout the words Moshe uses to beckon Yitro to stay with them. "You can be our eyes" - You - Yitro can help the people see the spiritual anchor that G-d provides for us. You can help us overcome the numerous difficulties in the journey ahead that shake our beliefs down to their roots. Stay with us; share your thoughts how you came to that conclusion of identifying with G-d. Help us open our eyes even in the face of grave challenges

in the wilderness.

Even in our days when faced with difficult challenges to our people, it is some- times rewarding to ask a newcomer to the Jewish people what where his motives, what drove him. Those insights add a special flavor to our daily lives and draws us closer to our faith. The character of Yitro presented to us so we as a nation can always think about seeing the world around us in a different, more spiritual way. 🏰