

# A FINAL SOLUTION

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

And Yisro the minister of Midian, the father in-law of Moshe heard everything that G-d did to Moshe and to Israel, His people- that HASHEM had taken out of Egypt. (Shemos 18:1)

And Yisro heard: What report did Yisro hear that caused him to come (join the People)? The splitting of the sea and the war with Amalek! (Rashi)

What did Yisro hear that caused him to take action and join the Jewish People? Rashi quotes the Mechilta that what he heard about was the splitting of the sea and the about the war with Amalek. The assumption is that he needed to hear about both events. If he needed absolute convincing about G-d then the splitting of the sea should have been sufficient. In what way was the war with Amalek a motivational force that pushed him into action?

As Rabbi Asher Wade tells it, "Something happened on the way to church one morning." The spark that set off an explosive chain of events that would completely alter the life of this ordained pastor in the Methodist Church was the Commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of Kristallnacht. It was November 5, 1978 and Asher Wade, a native of Virginia, was attending the University in Hamburg in Germany working towards his doctorate in the field of Metaphysics and Relativity Theory. He had already earned a B.A. in Philosophy in America and a post-graduate degree in Philosophical Theory at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. In addition, he had previously worked as an adolescent and marriage counselor at the U.S. Army Chaplaincy in Berlin while he was attending the Goethe Institute for Language Studies.

When Asher Wade and his German-born wife turned the page of the local newspaper that fateful morning in November, they were shaken out of their languid Sunday routine by the graphic pictures of the destruction of Jewish homes and stores of Hamburg during Kristallnacht. But the photograph they found most unsettling was the Great Synagogue of Hamburg during Kristallnacht. To their horror, they immediately recognized that the site where Hamburg's once thriving 180,000 member Jewish community had worshipped was now their university's parking lot.

How could this be? How could the country that had nurtured Beethoven and Goethe also be the incubator for such heinous acts of destruction? And so, their long journey began with a series of questions. "What was it like to be a student on Kristallnacht? What was it like being a scholar on Kristallnacht?" And finally, "What was it like being a Christian Kristallnacht?"

When they innocently posed these three questions to the respective authorities in their community,

according to Asher Wade, he and his wife were shaken out of their nest, "that comfortable position of the Cambridge elite." As the representatives of their church, they were dismayed when they discovered that the first to join Hitler's ranks was the Medical faculty, followed by the Law faculty. Five out of eight students, they found out, had openly joined the Nazi party. As a result of their probing, he and his wife began to feel like "charter members of the Hamburg leper colony." They were further shocked and disillusioned with Western Civilization, he said, as they "stumbled across what apparently looked like the unbroken gunpowder trail from the Holocaust—to the six Crusades—to the 305 years of the church-sanctioned Inquisition."

But now that they were out of the nest, two more positive and upbeat questions focused their attention in a new direction. "Who was this strange troop of people known as the Jews?" they asked themselves, "who didn't have a country but yet somehow survived with their own jurisdiction, their own laws and order, civil as well as religious, no matter where they went and no matter what language they spoke." And although he had it made in two worlds, academia and the world of religion, Reverend Wade withdrew from the church, left the ministry, converted to Judaism and he and his wife moved to the United States and eventually Israel.

What was it that sparked this minister to come join the Jewish People? Maybe it was a similar observation to that which alerted Yisro. The miracle of Jewish existence or a philosophical agreement about the notion of a Creator was not quite enough. The persistence of a dedicated evil that can coolly smile with civility cries out for an equal resolve and **a final solution**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](http://Torah.org).