

# WHAT HAPPENED

by Rabbi Label Lam

*And Moshe's father in law, Yisro, the chieftain of Midian, heard all that G-d had done for Moshe and for Israel, His people that HASHEM had taken Israel out of Egypt. (Shemos 18:1)*

And Yisro heard: What news did he hear that [made such an impression that] he came? The splitting of the Red Sea and the war with Amalek. (Rashi)

Moshe told his father in law [about] all that HASHEM had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians on account of Israel, [and about] all the hardships that had befallen them on the way and [that] HASHEM had saved them. Yisro rejoiced about all the good that HASHEM had done for Israel, that He had rescued them from the hands of the Egyptians. (Shemos 18:8-9)

Yisro rejoiced: Heb. וַיִּשְׂמַח, and Yisro rejoiced. This is its simple meaning. The Aggadic Midrash, however, [explains that] his flesh became prickly [i.e., gooseflesh] (וַיִּשְׂמַח בְּחֵדוּדֵימֵי)

Yisro hears about the splitting of the sea and the war with Amalek and decides to join the Nation of Israel in the desert. Then Moshe tells him of the very same events and his flesh becomes prickly- goose bumps- (Chidudim). What's the difference between the account that Moshe told his father in law and the version that Yisro had heard before? What motivated Yisro to make the big move? What did Moshe add?

There's an amazing story that took place in the north of the Land of Israel. A boat filled with secular college students was gliding through the waters of the Kineret Sea in the Galilee when a young girl was suddenly bumped off the vessel. The young lady was floundering in the water as everyone looked on in horror. Another smaller craft filled with a young Rabbi and a few students was in the immediate vicinity and the Rabbi leapt into action. He heroically jumped into the water without a moment of hesitation. He pulled her to shore where he applied whatever methods of resuscitation necessary to revive the almost drowning victim.

By the time she was already beginning to percolate with signs of life a small crowd of interested spectators had gathered closely by. One of them was a young man from the boat from which the girl had bounced overboard. After having witnessed the entire rescue procedure he asked the Rabbi in a rather cynical tone, "I thought you aren't allowed to touch a girl!?" The Rabbi looked at him and retorted sharply, "Where were you when she was drowning?!" The fellow had no answer. He was stricken silent.

The girl herself was so grateful to the Rabbi that she asked him what she could possibly do to repay him for having rescued her. His only request was that she should join him and his family for a Shabbos! She did just that and gladly! She loved her first Shabbos and she came back again and again. Eventually she became like a daughter and a regular Shabbos guest in their home.

In the meanwhile this young man who asked the crude question that earned the harsh response was left to ponder his ways. His introspection led him to seek out a Torah class which brought him to Shabbos and he too became a "Shomer Shabbos".

One Shabbos he found his way to the table of that Rabbi. They barely recognized each other but he did remember their guest, the young lady. They were reintroduced that Shabbos and eventually they began to date and got married. Amazing! The day the Rabbi saved the girl, he saved really rescued both of them and their future generations.

When Yisro heard about the rescue of the Jewish Nation by the water and then he saw that there was still room in the heart of humanity for the cynicism of Amalek he knew he could not remain a neutral party to history. He had to choose a side, take a firm stand. So he came to join the Jewish People. Then he heard what happened from Moshe's holy mouth. Now, this was not just a news story or history. It was the total truth! It was Divre' Torah! He was able to grasp the entirety of the picture, the unity-chidudim. With his flesh he sensed the enormity of **what happened**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](http://Torah.org).