

CHANGE OF HEART

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This week we read the parsha of Yisro. "And Yisro, the father-in-law of Moshe, heard all that Elokim had done for Moshe and Yisroel his nation. [18:1]"

What did Yisro hear that prompted him to come? He heard about the splitting of the sea and the war against Amalek. [Rashi]

The Ramban brings the two opinions of when this episode with Yisro took place either before or after matan Torah [the giving of the Torah]. He then asks, according to the opinion that Yisro arrived after matan Torah, why wasn't that earthshattering event a cause of his coming? If we were to look for an event that prompted Yisro to come and join the Jewish Nation, it would seem that matan Torah would figure far more prominently than either the splitting of the sea or the war against Amalek!

Furthermore, what was so inspiring about the war against Amalek? Wasn't it the victory in the war that would have inspired Yisro to come?

Yisro was aware of the great things that Hashem was doing for the Jewish Nation. However, that alone wasn't enough to motivate him to convert. However, the Darchei Mussar writes, when Yisro heard that Amalek had attacked Bnei Yisroel [the Children of Israel], he then had a change of heart.

Amalek heard of all the miracles including the splitting of the sea and had chosen to blind themselves to those facts and to attack Bnei Yisroel. Those incredible events did not move them. This tendency of Amalek to avoid and deny the obvious when it went against their agenda really shook up Yisro. He recognized the bankruptcy of such a nation and decided that he had to remove himself from such a group. He moved to join the nation that was diametrically opposed to Amalek. It was the war, not the victory, that made him come.

The contradiction between what is known and what is done can be so glaring by others and so elusive by oneself.

Rav Sholom Schwadron, zt"l, the Maggid of Yerushalayim, would tell a story of a father who complained bitterly that his son had joined a yeshiva [institution of advanced Jewish study]. "How could he do this to me?" he lamented. "My parents were religious and I was smart enough to move away from all of that. I brought my son up in a totally irreligious manner and now, of all places, he decides to go to a yeshiva?! Why can't he be like me?" he thundered to the Rosh [Dean of the]

Yeshiva.

The Rosh Yeshiva turned to the father and said, "But he has! He's grown up just like you. You disregarded what your parents taught you and he disregarded what you taught him. Your boy is just like you . . ."

The method of a Maggid was to tell stories that would make a person laugh at the follies of others and then, with their guard down, make them confront their own very similar follies.

When we contemplate all of the miracles that Hashem has done and is still doing for Bnei Yisroel, it behooves each person to hear and to come with a renewed dedication and enthusiasm.

Good Shabbos,

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