

## And Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law, heard about everything that G-d had done for Moshe and for his people, Yisrael. (18:1)

When Ariel Sharon, military leader and eventual prime minister of Israel, lost a son in a tragic accident, he was overcome with grief. A mutual friend approached **Horav Aryeh Levine, zl**, and asked him to invite Sharon to his home. Perhaps the general would be moved by the *tzaddik's divrei nechamah*, words of comfort. Thus far, no one was really having much luck in reaching him. Sadly, this was not Sharon's first encounter with tragedy, having lost his first wife and a son in a road accident.

The *tzaddik* absolutely refused to have Sharon come to his house. "It is my *mitzvah* to comfort the bereaved," *Rav Aryeh* said. "I will go to his house." This is part and parcel of the *mitzvah* of *nichum aveilim*, comforting mourners.

"But the *Rav* is not well," his friend countered. Apparently, this meeting took place during one of *Rav Aryeh's* illnesses, when he was extremely ill.

"It is no matter. I am going." *Rav Aryeh* rose from his bed, and, with great determination, went to visit Ariel Sharon. The *Rav* walked into his home and encountered a broken man. The grief had taken its toll on him. *Rav Aryeh* spoke at length about the meaning of tragedy and made a strong attempt at alleviating some of the sadness from Sharon's life. After returning home to *Yerushalayim*, *Rav Aryeh* purchased *mezuzos* in silver cases and had them sent to Sharon as a gift. Apparently, when he was there, he had not noticed *mezuzos* on any of the doorposts.

Ariel Sharon never forgot *Rav Aryeh's* act of kindness. The well-known *tzaddik* of *Yerushalayim* was a busy man. Yet, he made time to comfort a bereaved father. He would never forget this gesture. *Rav Aryeh* was so ill that he was later admitted to Hadassah Hospital for a while, during which time Sharon made a special trip to visit him.

*Rav Aryeh* was profoundly moved by this act of kindness. He was a man who commanded the entire Israeli army, the soldiers for whom *Rav Aryeh* regularly prayed. He would say, "They are angels; not one of us know how to appreciate or to value them properly."

Excited and very pleased to see his visitor, *Rav Aryeh* embraced the general with unusual warmth. Then *Rav Aryeh* thought to himself, "What am I to tell him?" It is not as if the two had very much in common. That *Shabbos* was *Parashas Yisro*. So, *Rav Aryeh* decided to discuss the first *pasuk* of the *parsha*.

"We read *Parashas Yisro* this *Shabbos*: 'And Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law, heard about everything that G-d had done for Moshe and for his people Yisrael.' *Rashi* asks, 'What did Yisro hear that

motivated him to leave his home in Midyan and trek to the wilderness and join the Jewish People?' *Rashi* replies: 'He heard about the parting of the Red Sea, and the battle between the Jewish People and Amalek.'

"Why was it necessary for Yisro to hear about two miracles to inspire his coming to the Jewish People? Why was not the Splitting of the Red Sea sufficient reason for him to come? Was this not a great miracle, indeed, unparalleled in human history? Nothing like this had ever happened before, and, for that matter, never since then has the sea split, allowing for an entire nation to walk through on dry land."

"Still", *Rav Aryeh* continued, "it seems that it was not enough. For when Yisro heard about it he thought, the Almighty indeed wrought a miracle, but a miracle is something extraordinary, unusual; it happens only once. One cannot predict what the future of *Klal Yisrael* will be from one miracle. Will they always have miracles if they need them?"

"But now, when Yisro heard about the battle with Amalek – a real, actual battle, which the Children of Israel fought with courage and bravery – that it happened through plain warfare, he understood that *Klal Yisrael* is a unique nation. Then he was convinced that it was necessary and worthwhile for him to come and get to know this firsthand." *Rav Arye* paused a moment, and then added, "Well, what happened once will happen once again!"