

Yisro heard...everything that G-d did to Moshe and to Yisrael, His People, that Hashem had taken Yisrael out of Egypt. (18:1)

The *Torah* records the various events that *Bnei Yisrael* experienced from the time that they left Egypt until they accepted the *Torah*. *Parashas Yisro* is juxtaposed upon the chapter that recounts the giving of the *Torah*. *Chazal* dispute precisely when Yisro joined the Jews. Some commentators believe that he arrived prior to the giving of the *Torah*. Others claim that Yisro came after the *Torah* had been given. We may question the position of *Parashas Yisro* according to those who contend that Yisro came after *Matan Torah*. Why does the *Torah* record his arrival prior to *Matan Torah* if, in fact, he came later? Even according to those who maintain that he came before *Matan Torah*, why is it necessary to interrupt the story of the Exodus in order to tell us about an individual who visited the Jews in the desert?

Horav Nissan Alpert, zl, asserts that *Parashas Yisro* is the culmination of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the exodus from Egypt. All of the nations heard what happened to Egypt. All of the nations trembled and were afraid. Yet, not a single gentile, not one pagan, was willing to change his lifestyle. They listened, and returned to life as usual. No one was prepared to join the Jews, except for one person--Yisro. Is that not remarkable?! So many heard and saw so much--but none of them was willing to change. The effect of the miracles was temporary. Yet, we Jews celebrate and relive the Exodus annually as if it had happened during our lifetime. Why? What makes us different? The *Torah* distinguishes us. Had we not received the *Torah*, the entire experience would have waned and dropped out of our minds, despite its intensely inspirational nature. The impression which was engendered by the miracles would have been short-lived. The experience has been eternalized only through *Torah* study. The Exodus, the splitting of the Red Sea with the ensuing incredible miracles, and the overwhelming revelation of Hashem became permanently imbued into the spiritual fiber of *Klal Yisrael* when we accepted the *Torah*.

Thus, *Parashas Yisro* is appropriately placed in a position in which it gives closure--as far as the gentile/pagan world was concerned--to all of the miracles that *Klal Yisrael* experienced! One gentile understood and accepted the lesson of the miracles. Only one gentile left his home, rejected his idols, and joined the Jews. Only one--and the *parsha* is named for him. With Yisro's act, the Exodus in the eyes of the gentile nations came to a close. Then the *Torah* was given. We understand that without the *Torah*, the greatest miracles might be forgotten.