

וישמע יתרו כהן
עשה אלקים למ
ידוד את ישראל
את צפורה אשת
בניה אשר שם ז
זיתרו בארץ זכר
אלקי אבני בעזרי
A True Friend
יתרו וזתן משה ו
המדבר אשר הו
ויאמר אל משה
ואשתך ושני בני
וזתנו וישתוו ויש
לשלום ויבאו הז
כל אשר עשה י
אודת ישראל אז
בדרך ויצלם ידו
אשר עשה ידוד
מצרים ויאמר ית
אתכם מיד מצר
העם מתוזה יד ב
ידוד מכל האלכ
עליהם ויקוז ית
לאלקים ויבא א
לוזם עם וזתן מי

In some ways, *Parashat Yithro* is the focal point of Judaism. It recounts the epic *Matan Torah*, giving of Torah, on Mount Sinai and the equally important *Kaballat Torah*, wholehearted acceptance of Torah by the Jewish people. The context and aftermath of the saga is expanded upon and concluded in the following parasha. Between them, the two Torah portions define the essence of the relationship between God and Man.

In a surprising intrusion into these grand-scale events creeps the story of the parasha's namesake – Yithro, father-in-law of Moshe. Bringing his daughter and grandchildren to rejoin their husband and father, Yithro comes himself to join the Jewish people.¹ But when he arrives he is very much the father-in-law, and strongly criticizes Moshe's administration. His suggestions regarding the institution of a broad legal system are implemented, and he then returns home – while we return to the saga of Mount Sinai.

Quite unaccountably, the Torah chooses to present this personal interlude here, though chronologically the story's place is much later.² It serves as an odd introduction to *Matan Torah*, and it is difficult to see why such a pivotal parasha should be forever associated with Yithro, of all people. "A True Friend" takes a closer look at the man and at what his personal story has to teach about the relationship of God and Man through Torah.

1. *Targum Yonatan* 18:6; *Tanhuma, Yithro*, 1,3; *Shemot Rabba*, 27:2. See endnote 6.

2. *Rashi* 18:13, s.v. *Vaybi*.

A TRUE FRIEND

Religious experience is a many-colored thing, and certain of its variety are quite grim – even threatening. In the United States alone, almost six million people have been involved with cults. “Religion” now comes in more variety than ice cream, from old standbys to Far Eastern and New Age, from Satanist and Hare Krishna to racist and psychotherapy cults. The assortment of absurdities dished up by “religion” boggles the imagination: doomsdays and tongues, astrology and the occult, King Arthur’s court and Hermes courtiers, Knights Templar and migration to Halle-Bopp. There must be *some* qualitative criteria for shopping the spiritual supermarket, for evaluating the context and contents of belief.

Yithro brings us face to face with the absolute uniqueness of Jewish religious experience. Despite the striking general similarity of myths around the world, in all recorded history there is no story similar to the events chronicled at Sinai. Nowhere else on Earth was God reported as communicating directly with several million human – and very opinionated – beings. The challenge of Sinai is unavoidable and uncomfortable; at some point in every Jew’s life it must be either understood, explained, or just explained away, but it cannot be ignored.

The encounter at Sinai is all the more powerful coming as it does immediately following Jewish questioning and Amalekite skepticism at Refidim.¹

They left Refidim and came to the Sinai Desert... (19:2)

– The Torah associates here the journey from Refidim with the arrival at Sinai....

MECHILTA, 19:1-2²

But the reader who keenly awaits the climactic resolution of doubt into historic faith at Sinai will be disappointed. At just the wrong literary moment the suspense is shattered by the intrusion of a somewhat

וּישָׁמַע יִתְרוֹ כֹּהֵן
עִשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לָמוֹ
יִדּוּד אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֶת צְפֹרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ
בְּנִיָּה אֲשֶׁר שָׁם זָ
הֵייתִי בְּאֶרֶץ זָכֹר
אֱלֹהִים אָבִי בְעֶזְרִי
יִתְרוֹ וּזְתָן מִשָּׁה וּ
הַמִּדְבָּר אֲשֶׁר הוּא
וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל מִשָּׁה
וְאִשְׁתֶּךָ וּשְׁנֵי בָנָי
וּזְתָנוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ וַיִּשַׁ
לְשָׁלוֹם וַיָּבֹאוּ הַזֶּ
כֹּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְיָ
אוֹדֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲזַ
בְּדֶרֶךְ וַיִּצְלַם יְדֹ
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יִדּוּד
מִצָּרִים וַיֹּאמֶר יְיָ
אֲתַכֶּם מִיַּד מִצָּר
הָעַם מִתּוֹזֹת יָד נֹ
יִדּוּד מִכֹּל הָאֱלֹהִים
עָלֵיהֶם וַיִּקְוֹז יִתְרֹ
לְאֱלֹהִים וַיָּבֹא אֵ
לְוָזֶם עִם וּזְתָן מִטְ

disgruntled father-in-law into the Torah narrative. Consider how utterly out-of-place the story of Yithro is here. The dramatic transition from the previous parasha's

Amalek came and fought with Yisrael in Refidim (17:8),

to this parasha's

And they left Refidim and came to the Sinai Desert...facing the mountain (19:2),

chronicles the rebirth of a faith which matures at Sinai into the supreme expression of man's link with God. The passage from Refidim to Sinai was a journey from inhibition and insecurity to passion and responsibility.

Rather than allowing us to follow that epic journey to its climax at the Mountain, the Torah interrupts with a minor family drama:

Yithro brought Moshe's wife Tziporah (after she had been sent away), and her two sons... He sent word to Moshe: I, your father-in-law Yithro, am on my way to you, along with your wife and her two children.... (18:2,6)

Implying, "If you won't come out on my account, at least come out for the sake of your wife. And if you refuse to come for her, then come at least for her children's sake!"

MECHILTA, YITHRO, 1:6³

Moshe did go out to greet his father-in-law, and he bowed down and kissed him. They asked about each other's welfare and went into the tent. (18:7)

What makes this narrative break all the more irksome is the strong likelihood that this little story never even took place at this point in time, and that Yithro only arrived after the giving of the Torah, when he came to join the Jewish faith.⁴

Yithro arrived only after *Matan Torah*....

ZEVAHIM, 116a⁵

In which case the Torah has gone out of its way to ignore chronology in order to insert Yithro in an inexplicable spot.⁶ His story has come to serve as an introduction to the giving of the Law at which he was not even present, and the Ten Commandments have become linked with

Yithro in the subconscious of every heder child and the minds of all who follow the Torah reading.

In context of a parasha describing the giving of the Law to millions of women, men (in that order⁷), and children, the personal conversion of Yithro seems a small thing indeed. Unless something profound is added to the vision of Yisrael through Yithro's personal confrontation with Truth.

If Yisrael fulfill God's will, then the Holy One searches the globe to find one who is righteous among the nations of the world, and brings him and attaches him to Yisrael – such as Yithro.

YERUSHALMI, BERACHOT, 2:8

Yithro saw no *Giving* of the Torah (*Matan Torah*). But he did experience – very personally – an *Accepting* of the Torah (*Kabbalat Torah*). He serves as a paradigmatic seeker of truth and discoverer of truth.

Who is the “Convert to Truth” par excellence? Yithro.

TANHUMA, YITHRO, I

The parasha, then, presents both faces of the story: Yithro points the way to the discovery of truth, *Kabbalat Torah*, while *Matan Torah* provides the seeker with the model for the connection to truth.

Just as Yisrael could enter the covenant at Sinai only through circumcision,⁸ immersion,⁹ and the blood of offerings,¹⁰ so too must any individual who comes to join the covenant do the same....

KRITUT, 9a

The Torah intimates that the nature of belief and of man's search for God and truth, is expressed through Yithro's personal saga. And what a saga it was! So varied was his career that he had seven different identities,¹¹ and his search brought him into contact with every life style and belief of the civilized world. Yithro was the ultimate seeker, the world authority on comparative religion; the voice of experience.

There was not a single religion in the world that Yithro did not try out.

MECHILTA, YITHRO, 1:1

אילו אחר אומר עתה ידעתי כי
גדול הי' כל האלהים היו
אומרים זה אומר עתה ידעתי
אלא יתרו שהיה יודע שחור
על כל בני עבודת כוכבים
שבעולם ולא מצא בהם ממש
ואח"כ בא ונתגייר לזה נאה
לומר עתה ידעתי.
דברים רבה, א:ה

*Believe those who are seeking
the truth,
Doubt those who find it.*
ANDRÉ GIDE

The painful moral decisions of Yithro's career are only the most obvious expressions of the internal struggles of a life dedicated to the search for truth.

There were three people on Pharaoh's advisory council concerning the enslavement of the Jewish people... [One of the three], Yithro, fled the country.¹²

SOTAH, 11a

Yithro was a high priest. When he realized the bankruptcy of his religion (before he even met Moshe), he called together the city leaders and said, "I have served you all my life... Now go find yourself someone else."

They excommunicated him, and allowed no fraternization with him. No one could work for him or shepherd his sheep – that is the reason that his own daughters were out with the sheep when Moshe came....

SHEMOT RABBA, 1:32

Yithro's dedication to intellectual honesty went beyond his personal exploration of differing belief systems. He even refused to give his daughter in marriage to Moshe unless his grandchild-to-come was guaranteed similar exposure.

When Moshe asked for the hand of Tziporah in marriage, Yithro replied, "You must agree that your son be sent at first to study idolatry – only afterwards [may he study] for the sake of heaven." Moshe agreed.

"Swear it!" said Yithro, and Moshe swore.

MECHILTA, YITHRO, 1:1

Great 'seeker' though he was, Yithro never did relinquish his critical stance and clear rationality. He had a close relationship even with faithless Amalek,¹³ and his children maintained that fellowship throughout history.¹⁴ His acceptance of the Torah was absolute – *Now I know that God is the greatest of all... (18:11)* – and he circumcised himself,¹⁵ but he was no mindless 'True Believer'. He judiciously retained his critical faculties even vis-à-vis the people he joined.

In this parasha which bears his name, Yithro focuses those critical abilities on Yisrael – long *after* the giving of the Torah¹⁶ – and is less than impressed by some of what he sees.

Yithro, Moshe's father-in-law, saw all he [Moshe] was doing to the people and said, "What is this that you do to the people – why do you sit alone, while they must stand in line from morning to evening!?!...What you are doing is no good!" (18:14,17)

But this very independence, this unwillingness to accept the Lawgiver's own behavior, seems to contradict the Torah's presentation of Yithro's approach as a paradigm for accepting Torah. The key words of acceptance of the Torah were,

נעשה ונשמע...

Na'aseh venishma: Whatever it is that God says – we will do!
(24:7).

This implies a relinquishing of moral self-determination and anthropocentrism, such that human sensibility would no longer be the arbiter of ethical systems. No other point more forcefully defines the difference between Yisrael and the other nations, to whom too the Torah was offered.

God asked the nations, "Would you want to accept My Torah?"

They replied, "Well, what does it say in Your Torah?"...

Then God asked Yisrael, "Would you accept My Torah?"

They answered as with a single voice: "We will cherish Your Torah, and commit ourselves to keeping and performing whatever it says!"

PIRKEI RABI ELIEZER, 40:1

So, without begrudging Yithro his judgmental acuity, we need to question whether he is an acceptable model for achieving the Truth according to Torah. The fact is that he still seems to be self-centeredly (and, by *na'aseh venishma* standards, non-Jewishly) defining his own ethical principles and then measuring the Torah against them.

"What you are doing is no good!" (18:17)

– It bothered Yithro that Moshe should demean Yisrael in such a fashion [forcing them to stand in line for appointments].... (—Rashi¹⁷)

נגלה על בני עשו הרשע ואמר להם מקבלים אתם את התורה? אמרו לו פה כתיב בה? אמר להם לא תרצחו. אמרו זו היא ירושה שהורישנו אבינו שנאמר (בראשית כ"ז) על חרבך תחיה. נגלה על בני עמון ומואב אמר להם מקבלים אתם את התורה? אמרו לו פה כתוב בה? אמר להם לא תנאף אמרו לו כלנו מניאוף דכתיב בראשית י"ט) ותהרין שתי בנות לוט מאביהם, ודיאך נקבלה? נגלה על בני ישמעאל אמר להם מקבלין אתם את התורה? אמרו לו פה כתוב בה? אמר להם לא תגנוב אמרו לו בזו הברכה נתברך אבינו דכתיב (בראשית ט"ז) הוא ידויה פרא אדם... וכשבא אצל ישראל פתחו כלם פיהם ואמרו (שמות כ"ד) כל אשר דבר ה' נעשה מילתא, פרשת בחדש, ה'

There comes a point when Yithro's rugged intellectual honesty seems indistinguishable from the response of the nations: Tell us what the Torah says and we will tell You if we are comfortable with it.

Now, you listen to me. I will advise you – and may God be with you...

If you will do this [that I suggest] and God commands you, then you will prevail... (18:19,23)

Ask God [about my recommendations]. If He commands you to implement them, you will succeed – but if he stops you, you cannot prevail! (—Rashi¹⁸)

But on second thought – is Yithro really as intellectual as he is sometimes portrayed? After all, there are no philosophical arguments that trigger this turning point in his life. We are told only that,

Yithro heard about all that God had done for Moshe and Yisrael His people, how God brought Yisrael out of Egypt... (18:1);

He [God] brought upon them [the Egyptians] the very thing that they had plotted against others! (18:11).

Yithro heard— What did he hear that specifically moved him to come?

The splitting of the sea...the war against Amalek...

ZEVAHIM, 116a¹⁹

But events hardly establish satisfactory argument for suspending moral judgment. All that impressed Yithro – God's care for Yisrael, His sense of irony in orchestrating the Egyptians' mad dash into the water that had once served their murderous plot against Jewish infants, His hatred of Amalek's cynicism – all these may make God a pleasure to relate to, but they do not address the suspicion of irrationality, pithily asserted by a certain Sadducee:

Impetuous people, you Jews – shooting off your mouths before using your ears. You ought to have first learned whether you were comfortable with the Torah before jumping into accepting it!

SHABBAT, 89a

What indeed happened here to the concern for truth? What happened to Yithro, the erstwhile connoisseur of quality religious thinking? And what happened and happens to *us* in response to God's offer?

Come to think of it, even God Himself appears singularly non-intellectual here. Sinai is an opportunity – an historical one-time opportunity – to offer the human race a chance for some genuine, solid knowledge. We have a chance to know the Creator and this universe He created, a chance to heal the hells *we* have created – talk to us about *Truth*, for heaven's sake! Tell us that there is an instruction manual available for the human mind, for planet Earth, for eternity itself. If only God had been a little more open about what He was offering, maybe *H. sapiens* would have learned sapience at last. Instead, God forbids Moshe to say anything of the sort – there *must be no talk of Truth!*

These are the words that you will speak to the children of Yisrael
(19:6)

– Not a word less, and not a word more.

MECHILTA, BAHODESH, 2

There was to be only one criterion for accepting the Torah, and it was not the search for truth. What then was it? Listen to what God insists that Moshe say:

This is what you must say to the family of Ya'akov and tell the children of Yisrael:

You saw what I did in Egypt, and how I carried you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Me. And now, if you would listen to My voice and cherish My covenant, you would be My dearest treasure from among all the nations, though all the world is Mine. To Me you will be a kingdom of lords and a sacred nation.

These are the words you will speak to the children of Yisrael.
(19:3-6)

This is a proposition of love and union, not a prescription for truth. God refuses the role of Truth-resource, to be available for demand feedings of meaning and significance. He asserts a more profound role for which Yithro searched his entire life – a God who sustains relationship with care and trust and even irony. Yithro searched not for

And so you see
I have come to doubt
All that I once held as true;
I stand alone, without beliefs,
The only truth I know is you.

SIMON AND GARFUNKEL,
KATHY'S SONG

Once I shot an Iguana. I thought that I should be able to make some pretty things from his skin. A strange thing happened then, that I have never afterwards forgotten. As I went up to him, where he was lying dead upon his stone, and actually while I was walking the few steps, he faded and grew pale, all colour died out of him as in one long sigh, and by the time that I touched him he was dull like a lump of concrete. It was the live impetuous blood pulsating within the animal which had radiated out all that glow and splendor. Now that the flame was put out, and the soul had flown, the Iguana was as dead as a sandbag....I give the advice: "For the sake of your eyes and heart, shoot not the Iguana."

ISAK DINESEN
OUT OF AFRICA

The Truth, Authorized Version, but for truth that emerges from covenant.

All of the Torah is *Brit*,²⁰ covenant, relationship – Torah is called the *Sefer haBrit*, “Book of the Covenant.”²¹ This is not because relationship is simply a prerequisite for initiation into God’s mysteries – it is because Truth is not an abstraction, but a reality embedded in the nature of relationship with God and discovered only within it. The more profound, subtle and sophisticated the demands of that relationship, the more Truth it teaches. The Torah’s truths come from the living of that relationship, its vision of reality comes from a lover’s sharing the life of a beloved. Learning Torah is nothing less than an act of intimacy.

Learning Torah in the presence of an ignorant man is the same as raping that man’s fiancée right in front of his eyes [for every Jew is connected to Torah subliminally], as it says *Moshe instructed us Torah – an inheritance* (“*morasha*”) of the congregation of *Ya’akov* (*Devarim* 33:4). Read that not as *morasha* (מורשה), ‘inheritance’, but as *me’orasa* (מאורסה), ‘fiancée’.

PESAHIM, 49b

One who attempts to penetrate Torah without relationship but as an intellectual probe is guilty of the cheap clutching menace we call rape. One who is driven to *grasp* Truth wants to imprison it, to make it his own – and in doing so, corrupts that which he is convinced he loves. Capturing truth is as impossible as capturing beauty, for it withers in the cage of self and need. When Truth is only personal it becomes a weapon, an extension of ego and a justification of cultism, redefining reality and eroding the relationship with life as it erodes love. To such a one the Torah’s deeper secrets remain hidden; they can reveal themselves only through a constantly renewed relationship with God and reality.

Rambam, whose intellectual reputation and reputation as intellectual rivals Yithro’s, defines the type of individual who has access to Truth:

One who labors *out of love* will strive for Torah...will walk the pathways of wisdom, not for anything in the world: not out of

fear of evil and not to gain the good. *He will do Truth because it is True....*

What kind of love? An overwhelming, passionate, and intense love, so that his soul is utterly bound to the love of God, and he is *madly* in love – thinking about it always as if he were possessed by love sickness over a certain woman that he cannot get out of his thoughts, consumed by her always whether sitting or standing, eating or drinking – beyond that is the lover of God impassioned in his love....

MISHNE TORAH, HILCHOT TESHUVA, 10:2,3

What Yithro, seeker of emergent truth, attempted to measure here was the only thing one *can* measure before committing to love: the trustworthiness of relationship. Moshe must show that he cares enough to come to greet his father-in-law and his family; Moshe must treat every member of the children of Yisrael with the dignity and respect due to *a kingdom of lords and a sacred nation*. Because relationship is an unfolding bilateral reality, it must always be examined personally. And God agrees with Yithro:

Said God to Moshe: Go! This man is coming because he cares, he wants to be close to Me. You must make him feel wanted, so do not act distant....

SHEMOT RABBA, 27:2

Not only did God agree, He went out of His way to show personal love, to display His openness to relationship with Yithro.

Yithro came – and God showered manna specially for him....

SHEMOT RABBA, 27:5

The transformation of Yithro through relationship is no different than the metamorphosis of the Jewish people as a whole; no different than the process that led that most famous of all converts, Ruth, to discover truth in love.

Where you go, I go... your nation is my nation and your God, my God. (Ruth 1:16)

Her drive to join the Jewish people was pure love, pure relationship. Truth? Ruth was sure it would emerge, because of the meaning she saw embedded in the life of Naomi, her beloved.

*What gives life its value you can find—and lose. But never possess.
This holds good above all for "the Truth about Life".*

DAG HAMMARSKJOLD

Naomi started to tell her, “But we have 613 *mitzvot*...” –
[Ruth interrupted] *Your nation is my nation*;

Naomi told her, “We are not allowed idolatry.” –
[Ruth responded:] *Your God is my God.*

YEVAMOT, 47b

What you may find astonishing is the way that purely *halachic* considerations governing conversion are predicated on precisely the same idea. There is no mechanism for dealing with a potential convert who is searching for truth per se, only for one who seeks relationship – *even if he has no concept of truth at all!*

How do we go about accepting a genuine convert?... We say to him, “Why would you want to become Jewish – don’t you know that these days the Jews are belittled, disparaged, scorned, scattered, chased from place to place, and suffer affliction?”

If he replies, “I know it, and I am not even worthy [to be part of it]” we accept him on the spot.

MISHNE TORAH, HILCHOT ISUREI BI’A, 14:1

Incredibly enough, this individual we just “accepted on the spot” has never heard of Truth or the faith of Yisrael – he has never even heard of God! Only now, continues Rambam, do

We then teach him fundamentals of our religion, such as the existence of One God, and some sample *mitzvot*... We do not go overboard because we do not want to push him away into the path of evil... a person can only be attracted with tenderness and warmth...

The well-known story of Hillel and the convert beautifully expresses the same idea.

Once a certain gentile came before Shammai and said, “I want to convert on the condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot.” Shammai chased him out with the rod he held in his hand.

Then he came to Hillel, and Hillel converted him, saying, “What you dislike, do not do to your friend. That is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary – go study!”

“*To your friend*” refers to God, who is *Your friend and the friend of your father – do not let Him down (Mishlei 27:10)*. (—Rashi²²)

SHABBAT 31a

Yithro had other names, names to reflect this sort of friendship. He was called Hēver,²³ which means “Friend.” And he was called *Re‘uel*...

Re‘uel refers to Yithro.

Why was he called *Re‘uel*? Because he became a friend/*re‘a* to God/*El*.

SHEMOT RABBA, 1:32

Truth cannot be taught. Truth can be discovered through sharing life. And in so sharing you become, as Yithro did, a true friend.

Whoever involves himself in Torah just for its own sake...becomes known as “Friend,” “Beloved,”...the secrets of Torah emerge for him, and he becomes an overflowing spring....

AVOT, 6:1



A TRUE FRIEND

I47

*Truth is a matter of direct apprehension—
you can't climb a ladder of
mental concepts to it.*

LAWRENCE DURRELL



- 1 Shemot 17:8. See essay 7, “Shadow of Doubt.”
- 2 Cf. Rashi and Ramban 19:2, s.v. *Vayis'u*, ד"ה ויסעו.
- 3 Rashi 18:6, s.v. *Ani*, ד"ה אני הותנך; Cf. also Shemot Rabba, 27:2; Targum Yonatan 18:6.
- 4 Shemot Rabba, 1:32; 27:2,6; *Yalkut Shimoni*, Yithro, 268; Mechilta, Yithro 1:2.
- 5 Cf. Mechilta opening of Yithro, and the long analysis in Ramban and Ibn Ezra 18:1; Rashi 18:13, *Divrei David* and *Mizrahi*, op. cit. Targum Yonatan 18:13. But see Targum Onkeles, Rabbeinu Bahya, *Da'at Zikanim*, *Malbim*, *Ha'emek Davar*, *Commentary on Chumash*, op. cit; RSR Hirsch, 18:5.
- 6 Explanations for this unlikely juxtaposition are offered by Ibn Ezra 18:1. Also *Kli Yakar*, 18:1. Cf. Shemot Rabba, 27:6, Tanhuma, *Yithro*, 3:1.
- 7 Shemot Rabba, 28:2; *Pirkei Rabi Eliezer*, 40.
- 8 Proof of this for Sinai is found by the Talmud in Yehoshua 5:5.
- 9 Proof of this for Sinai is found by the Talmud in Shemot 24:6.
- 10 As per Shemot 24:5.
- 11 Mechilta, *Yithro*, 1:1; Shemot Rabba, 27:8 (See commentary of R. Ovadiah of Bartenura, *Amar Nakeh*, 18:1). He may have had more names—cf. *Hizkuni* 18:1 who suggests that the seven name list of the Mechilta concern only those listed in the Five Books, as he finds others elsewhere.
- 12 After his many arguments against Pharaoh's plan were rejected. See *Yalkut Shimoni*, Shemot, 168. There is a question as to the identity of Re'uel mentioned here, as he may have been Yithro's father. Cf. *Sifrei Beha'alotcha* 78 as opposed to Mechilta, *Yithro*, 1:1 and Shemot Rabba, 1:32. Cf. Rashi 18:1.
- 13 Cf. Midrash Shmuel, 12:2.
- 14 Cf. Shmu'el I,15; Bamidbar 24:20 and *Pirkei Rabi Eliezer*, 43. Ibn Ezra (18:1) even suggests that this explains the non-sequitur of Yithro's appearance here – he must be mentioned in context of Amalek so as to distinguish between the two!
- 15 Sanhedrin, 94a; *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Yithro*, 268.
- 16 Rashi 18:13, s.v. *Vayhi*, ד"ה ויהי ממהרת.
- 17 Ibid., s.v. *Vaya'amod*, ד"ה ויעמד העם. But see Ibn Ezra 18:14, s.v. *Vaya'are*, ד"ה וירא.
- 18 S.v. *Vetzivcha*, ד"ה וצוך.
- 19 Cf. Rashi, s.v. *Vayishma*, ד"ה וישמע.
- 20 Cf. Pesahim, 38b; Tosefta, *Halla*, 1; Nedarim, 32a; Zohar, III:73.
- 21 Shemot 24:7; Melachim II,23:2.
- 22 S.v. *De'alach*, ד"ה דעלך.
- 23 Mechilta, *Yithro*, 1:1.