

A New Day, A New Way

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Imagine one morning you open the newspaper and see the following headline: *Pope Decides to Convert to Judaism*. Wouldn't that be something else? But actually, this has a precedent.

Yitro was the Pope of Midian. He served every conceivable idol before deciding to convert to Judaism. In fact, the Baal HaTurim states that the numerical value of the name *Yitro* (616) is equal to that of the phrase *Komer Hayah La'avodah Zarah* (He was a priest to false gods).

After Yitro saw the great miracles that God did for the Jews, he declared, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the deities!" (Exodus 18:11). On this verse, the *Zohar* (Yitro 67) comments, "Then God was exalted in His glory from above and below." This seems to imply that only at that point did this ultimate sanctification of God's Name take place. Yet surely during the days of our Patriarchs, a greater sanctification must have happened. Why is Yitro the model for the sanctification of God's Name?

The more distant something is from Godliness, the greater is its potential to reveal Godliness. When Yitro, the Pope of Midian, converted, the world noticed. All his congregants who never considered belief in monotheism saw their influential leader embracing it. What greater sanctification of God's Name could there possibly be?

We may not be the Pope, but we have the same ability to sanctify God's Name. Every day is an entirely new creation, a new opportunity to reveal Godliness in the world. No matter what happened yesterday, God tailor-made today so we could contribute in our own unique ways. Not only that, but if yesterday was a lousy day, then how much more do I have the potential today to bring light and Godliness to that very place I have fallen to! Even if I have sunken very low, when I connect to God in whatever way I can, right here and right now, I can elevate even the darkest places. This is not a task that angels can perform, or even the great tzaddikim. God gave this ability to each and every one of us specifically.

Do we believe in ourselves? Or do we give up before we even try, because we think it's too late? Rebbe Nachman exclaimed, "Gevalt! Never give up!" Keep doing whatever you can, even if that means starting over again and again, and you will connect yourself and the place you're at to God each time. If our Rabbis said about someone who sinned his entire life and repented one moment before he died that his sins are forgiven, how much more blessed is one who has begun his return over and over again! This person is constantly revealing Godliness in the places that others much greater than him are afraid to approach.

Yitro said, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the deities, for with the thing that they plotted, [He came] upon them." Rashi comments, "With the pot they thought to cook with, were they cooked." Perhaps Yitro also meant, "Now, specifically, I see how great God truly is, for I see that the place that I descended to became the springboard for the

greatest manifestation of God's glory!"

Based on Likutey Halakhot, Kriat HaTorah 6