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Yitro's Perception

Moshe's father-in-law Yitro had quite an impact on Israelite history in the wilderness.

He told Moshe that a leader has to learn to delegate. Otherwise, one ends up with what today is called burn-out - leader and community.

Yitro's final appearance is this Shabbat in Parshat B'ha'alot'cha, in Bamidbar 10:29-32.

Actually, in this passage he is not called Yitro but Chovav, which is another of his seven names. Ramban says that this name, meaning "beloved", was given to him when he entered the faith of Israel.

In verse 31, Moshe calls his father-in-law "our eyes". Maybe the phrase means "our guide", but the rabbinic sages understood the word not in a physical but a poetic sense.

Yitro, they posited, was well versed in all the then known religions, and recognised - with the eye of intellectual and spiritual perception - that no faith had such an elevated God concept as the faith of Israel.

He was said to derive from the family of Cain, whose unethical tradition he rejected in favour of the Ten Commandments, which appear in the Torah (Sh'mot 20) in the portion called Yitro after him.

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