

Transcendental Trio: Parshat Beshalach

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

When Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, Amalek attacked them. It is obvious from the plain reading of the text that the war was waged on two fronts. Yehoshua led the physical battle and fought on the ground, and Moshe waged the spiritual war by sitting on a rock on a hill with his arms raised and supported by Aharon and Chur. How do these three people represent the spiritual forces that can defeat Amalek? The Malbim explains that Aharon represented the unity of *Bnei Yisrael*, for he was known for his love of the people and his constant effort to bring peace. Chur, on the other hand, was the champion of the glory and honor of Hashem. Moshe was the unifying factor, holding it all together. Rabbi Roberts explains that *Bnei Yisrael* needed the merit of these two men. Aharon represented the values between man and his fellow man, and Chur represented the values between man and God. The goal, writes the Chasam Sofer, is to meld these two qualities for this creates blessings and joy. Moshe represented this synthesis, adds Rabbi Schwab. Whereas for all other battles Moshe prayed alone, here in the battle against Amalek, he required both these attributes to join him.

The Shvilei Pinchas writes that this was the most intense battle ever fought. Amalek tried to eradicate the knowledge of God's presence in the world by the introduction of evil spirits that would shroud God's presence. These three spirits were *mashchit* – destroyer, *af* – anger, and *cheimah* – rage which represent the initials for Moshe, Aharon and Chur, the three *tzadikim* who would counteract these forces. This is the threefold evil cited in Tehillim 78:38 and recited before Maariv: "He forgives iniquity and does not destroy; frequently He withdraws His anger, and does not arouse His entire rage."

Bnei Yisrael asked, "Is Hashem truly within us or not?" This slight doubt presented Amalek with the opening to attack, for the mission of Amalek is to cast doubt into our faith, writes Meor Vashemesh. Therefore Moshe's uplifted

hands became the guideposts to send the eyes of *Bnei Yisrael* back toward heaven and to strengthen their faith. Rabbi Wolbe in Aleh Shor explains that they did not question whether or not Hashem exists. Rather they questioned whether His involvement in life was practical or whether His *Torah* was merely theoretical?

Amalek, the grandson of Esav, inherited the DNA that would confine *Torah* to intellectual discussion. After all, Esav was intellectually immersed in *Torah* and his head is buried in *Meorat Hamachpelah* precisely for this reason. But he never let *Torah* principles guide his actions. Otherwise, he never would have sold the birthright for a bowl of soup! We must internalize *Torah*, writes the Halekach Vehalibuv. We must strive to be *talmidei chachamim*, constant students of the truth of *Torah*, and *bnei Torah*, a metaphorical son of our *Torah* teachers.

Our *Torah* must impact our lives. The purpose of prayer is to bring us closer to Hashem and to a stronger faith that we must rely constantly on Hashem, writes the Tiv Hatorah.

This why Moshe raised his hands above his head, explains Rabbi Tatz. Hands symbolize action, and as the people who accepted the *Torah* at Sinai, we profess that we will do, *naaseh*, before *nishma*, whether or not we understand with our heads. As long as the hands were higher than the head, *Bnei Yisrael* prevailed, but if the head and the ego led the way, *Bnei Yisrael* faltered.

The Halekach Vehalebuv explains why Moshe supported himself by sitting on an even, a rock. The three letters that spell out é-v-en are an acronym for the three tractates that one should study if he hopes to become a righteous person: *Avot* – Ethics of our Fathers, which focuses on interpersonal/ social relationships; *Berachot* – which focuses on our relationship with Hashem and thanking Him for all that we have; and *Nezikin* – Damages

which teaches respect for the property of others. These are the constant battles of Amalek: Do I need to acknowledge Hashem? Do I need to respect the rights and the property of others? Let me lift my hands and show you that they are clean and pure in all my dealings.

The Alshich Hakadosh explains that Moshe understood that he would need to tap into the merit of our forefathers to succeed in this battle. Moshe represented Yaakov, absolute and complete truth. But he needed Avraham and Yitzchak alongside him. Avraham had the imperfect Yishmael along with the righteous Yitzchak, while Yitzchak fathered the evil Esav. To counter these, Moshe drafted Aharon who, through his own constant service of *chesed*, would negate the influence of Yishmael and perfect the *chesed* of Avraham. Similarly, Chur would be the counterbalance to the evil Esav who misused the *gevurah* (strength) that Yitzchak represented. Moshe could thus draw on the merit of our forefathers without involving their evil offspring. The redemption, writes the Sefat Emes, will always come through the merit of our matriarchs even when the merit of the patriarchs has ended.

The *parsha* ends with the promise that Hashem will erase the memory – **a(e)mcheh** – of Amalek from under the heavens. The Vilna Gaon explains that *emcheh* is as an acronym for our deliverers from each exile. Our deliverers from Egyptian exile were **A**haron, **M**oshe, **C**hur and **H**ashem. The principals in the redemption from the Persian exile were **(A)**Esther, **M**ordechai, **C**harvonah and **H**ashem. Our final redemption will be through **E**liyahu, **M**oshiach, eight **(ch)** princes and **H**ashem. With Hashem guiding us, we will vanquish the evil forces of Amalek. May it be speedily, in our days.

Yechekel Perek 35: The Fate of Edom-Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

"And you will know that I am Hashem. I heard all your blasphemies and mockery that you said concerning the mountains of Israel, saying, 'They have become desolate; they were given to us to consume.'" Esav and Yishmael's claim to being the new chosen nation is manifested by their doing everything possible to prevent our return to Israel. The Yishmaelites acts of terror and destruction seem to revolve disproportionately around the burial tombs of Yosef, Rachel, *Me'arat*

Hamachpeila, *Har Habayit*, the *Kotel*. They focus on the sites that validate our claim to the land.

Hashem says, "You've magnified yourselves against Me with your mouth, and you have multiplied your words against Me. I have heard." Besides the weapon of the sword, the Edomites have also used the weapon of words against us, as have the Yishmaelites. "So said Hashem: 'When the whole earth rejoices, I

shall make you desolate.' " When Mashiach comes, the whole world will experience the joy of resolution and awareness. That is when Edom's desolation will be most striking. "As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel because it became desolate, so will I do to you; Mount Seir and all Edom will become desolate, even all of it, and they will know that I am Hashem." All of the bearers of false theologies will meet their destruction.

The Turning Point in Egypt Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

Pirke Avot tells us, Hashem created the world with ten utterances. Couldn't He have created the world with just one? The sages explain that Hashem used ten utterances to give good reward to the righteous who give existence to the universe that was created with ten utterances, and in order to decimate the wicked who destroy the world that was created with ten utterances.

The Torah begins with the words, "*Bereishit bara Elokim et hashamayim v'et ha'aretz*." The word *et* is mentioned twice. The commentators explain that it comes to add something. Chazal say that in the very first moment of creation, the building blocks of all of creation came into being. For the next six days, Hashem shaped and formed each of the different parts into specific creations. If Hashem would have created the whole world with one utterance, people could deny this one utterance and it would be all or nothing in terms of their spiritual state. A wicked person who would choose to do evil would have only one choice to make, to believe in Hashem as the source of everything. If he does, he fulfills his purpose, and if not, he is ultimately

destroyed. Hashem in His mercy did not want it to do this. Thus He created the world with ten utterances.

In Hebrew, the world is called *olam*, from the root word *ulam*, to hide. Hashem conceals Himself in this world so that free choice can exist. It is possible to go through life without ever recognizing Him. But it isn't a matter of one mistake or good choice. A person can be a partial believer. He can believe Hashem created the world, but he might think He is not involved in its day to day running.

In the process of creating, Hashem covered Himself with ten layers. Every creation created levels of more concealment. He enabled people to make ten mistakes. When a person reveals Hashem in this world, when he brings *kavod shamayim*, he can do it on many different levels and his reward in turn is very great. Similarly, if he degrades His name, his punishment too will be greater.

Hashem hid Himself so we would work to reveal Him. One can understand this by looking at a human relationship. At first a relationship is based on superficial things. You

cannot see much at first glance. But as the relationship gets stronger people come to understand more about each other. In order to reveal one must invest and give of oneself. This is what makes the relationship meaningful. The more one successfully reveals, the better the relationship gets. Hashem wants us to enjoy a profound connection with Him. It can go deeper and deeper, as He is endless. He covered Himself to enable us to reveal Him. To the extent that we invest effort to do so, our relationship will grow stronger and more fulfilling.

Hashem hides himself behind the veil of nature and the laws of cause and effect. We can forget Him. But He's not hidden enough so that we are unable to find Him. This concept is rooted in the word *Elokim* with which creation begins. *Elokim* signifies justice, the laws of nature, and cause and effect. One can also read it as *Mi Eleh*, who are these? On the one hand one sees a reality that seems self-contained and independent, running on the laws of nature. But Hashem is not so hidden that we cannot discern Him. Nature begs the question, "Who created all this?"