



Amalek: Attack And Awakening – Parshat Chukat

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

Bnei Yisroel are about to enter the Promised Land. Aharon has died and the clouds of glory surrounding Bnei Yisroel in his merit have disappeared. Once again, they are attacked by an enemy trying to block their advance. The Torah relates the events:

“The Canaanite king of Arad, who dwelled in the south, heard that Israel had come by the route of the spies, and he fought against Israel and took a captive from it. Israel made a vow to Hashem and said, “If He will deliver this people into my hand, I will consecrate their cities.”

Who was this Canaanite king and why did he choose to attack now? If defeating Israel was his goal, why did he just take one captive instead of waging an all out war? What is the significance of the ambiguous wording of the prayer Bnei Yisroel uttered, and why did they consecrate the spoils of this battle specifically to Hashem? Further, what is the significance of the route they were now taking?

Rashi explains that the king of Arad and his Canaanite nation were in fact Amalek, the eternal enemy of Bnei Yisroel, who dwelled in the area south of Eretz Yisroel. Why are they identified as Canaanites? Here lies the subtle deception of Amalek. Amalek was aware that the strength of Bnei Yisroel lay in its power of prayer. As the Oznam LaTorah explains, it wasn't just that Bnei Yisroel were now vulnerable because the clouds of glory vanished; it was a matter of undermining the voice of Yaakov. If Amalek could weaken the prayers of Bnei Yisroel, explains Rabbi Dovid

Hoffsteder in Drash Dovid, then Bnei Yisroel would lose their power, and Amalek would be victorious. So they disguised their voices, speaking like the Canaanites, so that Israel would pray to be victorious over the wrong nation. They took one captive, hoping to instill fear into the hearts of Bnei Yisroel.

But the Jewish people were not taken by this ruse. They noticed that the enemy spoke like Canaanites but wore the uniforms of Amalekites. Unsure of the enemy's identity, they prayed to win over a generic enemy, this people. To fortify their prayer, they coupled it with an action, a vow to consecrate the enemy and its cities to God.

The experience left an impression on Bnei Yisroel, just as Yaakov was left limping even though he was victorious in his battle with Esau's guardian angel.

Although they had full faith in Hashem, they now realized how fully dependent they were on Hashem for every morsel of food and every sip of water. This is why the *parsha* continues with Bnei Yisroel complaining about their food and water, for they were afraid they could not live constantly on such a high spiritual level to merit such benevolence. Aharon had united the people in peace and brought them to a higher level of intimacy with *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*. With his death, the unity that had protected Bnei Yisroel from harm dissipated. The Taam Vodaat explains that Amalek was the paradigmatic non-believer. They may not have believed in the power of prayer at all, but they wanted to throw Bnei Yisroel off its defenses. They didn't declare all out war, but

just took one captive to show good intentions. They changed their language to a language of peace, saying we can coexist. In this way, they hoped to entrap Bnei Yisroel and catch them off guard. Their real motive or identity, as manifest in their clothing, was to destroy them. The Shaarei Chaim takes this idea one step further. Amalek always symbolically represents the evil inclination whose purpose is to lead us to self-destruction through sin. It entices us with friendly language, but we must be wary. Our job is to recognize this as the ploy of the *yetzer hara*. We must pray to Hashem for His help.

The Drash Mordechai citing Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac Sher writes that Amalek is within us. We know intellectually that we are nothing but dust and ashes, yet we cannot reconcile that with our desire to live our lives on an almost totally physical and materialistic level. We cannot shed our external clothing even as our inner voice tells us differently. Amalek knew the power of Bnei Yisroel's prayer, but couldn't resist the temptation to try to annihilate them. We too often fall into the pursuing physical desires, even when we know they are bad for us. Our task is to wrest control from the physical world around us, the world of illusion, and strengthen ourselves in the world of the spirit and truth. We must let our minds rule our hearts.

Let us be sensitive to the nuances of the world around us so that we can recognize the various guises of the *yetzer hara*. Let us work to merit winning the final battle against the Amalek within and the Amalek without.

Netivot Olam II: Etymology of Shalom Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Both the Written and Oral Torah refer to peace as *shalom*. However, the written Torah refers to conflict as *riv* while the Oral Torah calls it *machloket*. *Machloket* begins with the letter *mem*, an open letter. When you say about a person, “He did this and it's wrong,” you create openings and vulnerable spots. This is the opposite of *shalom*, which is something perfectly whole. If you take away the *mem* from *machloket*, you get *chelek*, a fraction or a piece. The disjointed parts may be there but

they are not joined together or a part of something bigger. There's no possibility of them becoming whole.

The open *mem* is compared to turning on a faucet. When you open it, more and more water flows. The act of opening doesn't predict where it will lead to. *Machloket* by its nature doesn't dissipate. It's like a camel's hump that can take in all of the water and store it within. What keeps it going is falsehood and absence

of reality. We often see *machloket* that has nothing to do with the issue and everything to do with personality. It's usually, “I'm right, you are wrong. Why should you win? Why should I listen to you?” *He'edar* is when a person thinks, I should rule. But there's no place for that. Hashem is the one who should rule. *Machloket* always means taking Hashem out of the picture and trying to put the crown on one's own head. Hashem created us with the natural instinct of survival. When a person

Continued on Page 2



Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

אמך WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

Volume 7 Number 17

Brought to you by Naaleh.com

Netivot Olam II: Etymology of Shalom Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Continued from Page 1

says, "I'm right, you are wrong," he's really saying, "How can you kill me? My prevailing is my existence." What a person is looking for on a deeper more conscious level is affirmation. You can't get that through conflict. So people attempt to put more and more he'edar into the pot, which is like putting more and more oil into a burning fire.

Shalom doesn't mean homogenization, that all pieces are the same. Rather we're all pieces of the same puzzle. *Shalom* begins with the letter shin. In Hebrew, the letters of a word symbolize its message. Shin consists of a base with three lines jutting out, one to the right, one to the left, and one in the middle. This is in essence *shalom*. When there are two extremes, the middle line finds commonality and makes the final decision that will please both parties.

Avraham is symbolized by the right line which is *chesed*. Yitzchak is symbolized by the left line which is *gevurah*. Yaakov, the essence of Torah, is the line between them, called *tiferet*, harmony, which corresponds to peace. The middle stroke of the *shin* inclines a little to the left. We tend to like *chesed* far more than *din*. Talking about self-conquest will never get the same kind of audience that talking about kindness will. Therefore, the middle stroke

has to move a little more to the left, which is *din*, to combat the inherent pull towards the right side, which is *chesed*.

Rav Shteinman and the Gerrer Rebbe make a point of traveling together to give *chizuk* (encouragement) to Jews around the world. They've been to France and Belgium and have plans to go to England. This doesn't mean Rav Shteinman decided that Chassidut is the way to go. Nor does it mean that the Gerrer Rebbe decided that the Litvaks were right all along. Both *gedolim* retain the individuality of their approach, while pointing out by their example and by the enormous respect they have for each other that it's ok to work together. *Shalom* is not about an amalgamation, but about retaining individuality on the basis of truth.

The second letter of *shalom* is *lamed*, the highest of all the letters. Peace comes from a higher place. We could feel the beauty of individuality and how dependent we are on others. But from our vantage point, we cannot see the whole picture. Only Hashem knows what the puzzle should look like in the end. We have to be willing to admit that. We have to look above. The only way we can have peace between ourselves is if we cleave to Hashem. If we can let go of thinking that it's only our own individual piece of the puzzle that matters,

we will be able to see the interdependence between us. We see the beauty in the whole picture, and we can have *shalom*.

The last letter of *shalom* is the *mem stuma*, the closed *mem*. It is fenced in on all four sides, unlike a regular *mem* that has a little opening. True *shalom* is something closed. There's no room to take over. A man of peace who cares about the larger picture doesn't open the gate for *machloket*. If he wants to correct someone, he won't involve other people. He will talk to the person following the laws of rebuke. If it's necessary to consult others, he will do it in a way that won't bring to *machloket*.

When there's *shalom* among the Jewish nation, no enemy can attack us. The sinners are a part of the whole which includes the righteous people as well. There's no vulnerable area where the Satan can accuse. Sometimes it may be hard to feel at one with a person who you feel may be doing something wrong. This stems from the *tza'ar haShechina* (pain of the Divine Presence) within us. When we feel something is not right, we can't make peace with it. But we have to be willing as Jews to say, "This person is still a part of our people." There is a bigger picture.

Ask The Dayan 3

Based on a Naaleh.com Q&A Shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

Question:

In my teenage years I had a hobby. I collected car emblems by ripping them off people's cars. When I grew up, I realized I had stolen and mutilated people's property. It is now no longer possible to track down so many people. How can I correct what I did?

Answer:

The Shulchan Aruch discusses a similar problem. A shopkeeper with faulty weights cheated hundreds of people. He now wants to repent but does not know how to find all the people he stole from. What can he do? The Shulchan Aruch answers that he must set aside the amount he assumes he stole and donate it to something that will be invested for the use of the public. In that way there is a chance that the people he stole from will

benefit and there will be an atonement for his sin.

You can do the same. Find a charitable organization that serves the public. In Israel there are many public organizations such as Yad Sarah, which provides equipment for ill people. When you give money to such charities there's a chance that the people you stole from will benefit.

Help support Naaleh by searching the web! For more information visit www.iGive/Naaleh.com & www.iSearchiGive/Naaleh.com

visit us online at: www.naaleh.com | for questions, suggestions, or dedication opportunities, email contact@naaleh.com