



KINDER TORAH

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PARASHAS BESHALLACH

In loving memory of Devora Bas Aharon o'h ❖ Mrs. Doris Weiner ❖ A Woman of Valor

AMALEK

Amalek. The perpetual nemesis of the Jewish people. Where and how did the conflict with Amalek begin? The Children of Israel were encamped in Refidim. There was no water to drink. They fought with Moshe, demanding water. "Why did you take us out of Egypt to die of thirst in the desert?" (Shemos 17:3). Hashem instructed Moshe to take his staff, strike the rock, and water will come out. He did so and the rebellion stopped. "The place was called 'Masse Umeriva' (literally test and contention) because of the fighting of the Children of Israel and their testing of Hashem by saying, 'Is Hashem among us or not?'" (Shemos 17:7). Then came Amalek.

Rashi has a parable to this episode. A man once took his son on his shoulders and went out on the road. The son saw something nice by the side of the road. "Abba, can you pick that nice thing up and give it to me?" he asked. The father picked it up and gave it to his son. The son saw another goodie lying by the road. "Abba can you also get that for me?" Of course the father got it for him. The same thing happened a third time. They father and son then met a man on the road. The son asked the man, "Have you seen my father?" The father said to his son, "You do not know where I am?" He took the boy off his shoulders and a dog came along and bit him. So too with the Jewish people. Hashem is always found among us. He is ready and waiting to fulfill all of our needs. How can we dare say, "Is Hashem among us or not?"

Kinderlach . . .

Let us have a contest at the Shabbos table. Everyone try to think of an example of Hashem helping him. How about the time that your neighbor lost his scooter. You put up signs for hashovas aveida (returning a lost object). Someone found his scooter, read the sign, and returned it to your neighbor. Then you lost your wallet. That very same neighbor whom you helped find his scooter, found your wallet! Is there any doubt that Hashem is among us?

FIVE WEAPONS

Class, I have a few questions for you on this week's parasha. Please look at the first two verses. Who would like to read them?"

"I would, Rebbe."

"Go ahead, Chaim."

"It happened when Paroh released the people, Hashem did not lead them through the land of the Pelishtim, because it was near (Mitzrayim). For Hashem said, 'So that the people do not change their minds when they see war and return to Mitzrayim.' Hashem led the people

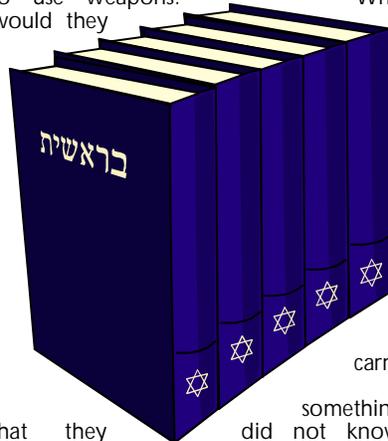
around through the desert to the Yam Suf, and the Bnei Yisrael had gone up armed from the land of Mitzrayim" (Shemos 13:17,18).

"Very good Chaim. Take note, class, that these two verses mention the Jewish people four different times. The first three times, they use the word, 'ha'am' – 'the people.' The fourth time, they are referred to as 'Bnei Yisrael.' My first question is – 'mah nishtanah?' what is the difference between the first three times, when they are referred to as 'ha'am,' and the fourth time, when they are called 'Bnei Yisrael?'"

"Second question: the verse states, And Bnei Yisrael went up 'chamushim.' What does the word 'chamushim' mean?"

"Armed with weapons."

Excellent, Avi. That is how our Sages translate this word. The Keli Yakar, however, asks several questions on this translation. The Bnei Yisrael were slaves for generations. They did not know how to use weapons. Why would they



carry

something that they did not know how to use? Furthermore, the battles of Klal Yisrael were not fought with conventional arms. Rather, The Almighty was (and is) our protector, and Torah and tefillos are our weapons. Why take arrows, spears, and clubs along if you have no use for them?"

"Rebbe, perhaps they took along those weapons in order to do the *hishtadlus* (preparative action) for war that Hashem requires. They were not allowed to rely on miracles; therefore they had to appear to be prepared to fight a conventional battle."

"Excellent, Yankie. The Keli Yakar addresses your point. He answers that this fact is well known. The Torah does not need to relate it to us at this point. Furthermore, 'chamushim' means five weapons. The verse details them. "Shield and buckler, bow, arrow, mace, and spear" (Yechezkel 39:9). There is really no need to mention the number of weapons here. Additionally, there is no apparent reason that each one should have exactly five weapons. Based upon the strength of all of these questions, the Keli Yakar concludes that there must be a deeper meaning to this verse."

"What is it, Rebbe?"

"The nation had no weapons in their hand other than the Chumash, which is hinted to by the word 'chamushim'. We need only the five books of the Torah to fight our battles."

"That is fascinating, Rebbe. Is there a relationship between this and the answer to the first question about 'ha'am' and 'Bnei Yisrael?'"

"Definitely, Yitzy. They were merely an 'am' when they left Mitzrayim. They were, in many respects, like any other 'am'."

"Why, Rebbe?"

They were lacking the main factor that distinguished them from the other nations – the Torah. The 'am' was not yet ready to receive the Torah."

"Why not, Rebbe?"

"They first needed to strengthen themselves by going through the tests of the Yam Suf and the Midbar."

"In what way were they tests, Rebbe?"

"The Yam Suf was a gigantic test of their *emunah* in Hashem. Only someone who believed totally in The Almighty would throw himself into the freezing waters. The Midbar, on the other hand, developed their *middah* (character trait) of *histapkus* (being satisfied with what Hashem gives you). They went forth into a hostile environment, unable to sustain life. They learned to rely totally on the food and protection that Hashem provided for them, as the Mechilta states, 'The Torah was only given to those who ate the mun.' The verses refer to these two tests. 'Hashem led the people around through the desert to the Yam Suf' (13:17). After passing these two tests, they earned the *zechus* (merit) of being referred to as 'Bnei Yisrael,' as the verse states, 'and the Bnei Yisrael had gone up armed from the land of Mitzrayim' (13:18)."

"What an inspiration for us, Rebbe!"

"Yes, Chaim. We must always remember what our true weapon is. When we are in danger, we do not rely on the conventional weapons of the other 'amim'. Rather we strengthen our Torah learning. That is our protection. That is our 'mega-ton bomb'. That wins our battles."

Kinderlach . . .

It does not matter how many policemen we have. The number of soldiers is also irrelevant. Guns, tanks, planes, bombs, helicopters, and missiles will not win wars for Klal Yisrael. What does our arsenal consist of? Just five weapons – the five books of the Torah. They protect us and win all of our battles. How do we acquire them? Step one is strengthening our emunah in Hashem and our middah of histapkus. Step two is learning Torah with all of our koach. Arm yourselves kinderlach, and you will win every battle.

Parasha Questions:

- Why did Amalek come? (Rashi 17:8)
- What happened to the 'mun' that was left overnight? (16:20) On Shabbos? (16:24)
- What did they find in Elim? (15:27)

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