

Beshalach - Amalek:
First Anti-Semites Who Will Cease To Exist In The End
by Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

In Shemos 17:8-16 we read of the attack Amalek launched against us shortly after we came out of Mitzrayim. Rashi tells us that the attack came from a lack of faith in Hashem's ability to sustain us in the desert and our questioning of Hashem's ability to provide water for the whole nation in the wilderness. After seeing all of the miracles Hashem had done for us at that point, why should there have been any question in our minds?

Moshe told Yehoshua to choose men and to lead the battle against Amalek. Rabbeinu Bachaya tells us that Amalek were experts in astrology. Amalek purpose chose people who would not die that year as their warriors. So we had to choose people whom it was also not their time to die within the coming year. Because of this situation though, the Torah states that Yehoshua was only able to weaken Amalek and not destroy them altogether because the Ameleki fighters had not reached their time to die yet. The Torah also tells us that when the battle was taking place Moshe held in his hands in prayer and was supported by Aharon and Chur to see that his hands do not fall. It was imperative that his hands would remain this way for the duration of the battle. Lest we think that Moshe Rabbeinu had some magical power in his hands, Chazal tell us at the end of the Third chapter of the Mishnah Rosh Hashanah that the purpose was to keep Am Yisroel focused on the fact that their victory lies not in their military power but in belief in Hashem to fight the battles for them. Hence the expression, 'And his hands were *emunah* until the sun went down'.

By way of Midrash, Rabbeinu Bachaya explains that Moshe was connecting Am Yisroel to the Avos. The phrase *Emunah* is referring to Avraham of whom it is stated and he believed in Hashem [Bereishis16:6]. The phrase *od bo*, until it came refers to Yitzchak of whom it is stated [Bereishis 24:62] Yitzchak came from Bo. *Shemesh*, sun refers to Yaakov who the Torah tells us explicitly that the sun set for him in Bereishis 28:11. Kabbalistically, Rabbeinu Bachaya explains that Moshe was channeling the flow of divine energy through the same technique that the Kohanim use with their ten fingers when they are Hashem's agents to bless Am Yisroel.

Rav Aharon Kotler.Z'l, brings a Midrash about Yehoshua specifically being chosen to fight Amalek since he was a descendent of Yosef. Chazal had an understanding of the verses that Yosef was Yaakov's weapon to Fight Esav. One place we see this is Rashi on Bereishis 30:22 where he brings this idea that once Yosef was born Yaakov felt confident to retrun to Eretz yisreol and to face Esav. Rashi also quotes the verse in Ovadiah 1:18 that Yosef will be the flame to consume Esav which will be the straw. Origanally, King Shaul who was also descendent from Rachel was to utterly destroy Amalek but failed at carrying out this mission. The significance of Rachel's sons

was that they showed no jealousy of each other in any form as the other brothers had. Rav Kotler quotes from the Targum Sheni on Megillas Esther that we find a parallel in the future when Mordechai, again a descendent of Rachel and a descendent of Shaul was the one to confront Haman a descendent of Amalek.

Among the meforshim that have a kabbalistic influence we find a general theme of Amalek representing the *yetzer harah*, the evil inclination. The righteousness of Yosef is represented by Yehoshua and the spreading of Moshe's hands in tefilah represents the weapons to fight the *yetzer hara*. In other words, the yetzer hara is fought with Torah, tefilah and control over the yetzer hara which is represented by Yosef in the fact he was able to control himself against the temptations of Potiphar's wife. More specifically, the Alshich Explains that Yitzchak's bracha to Esav was that when Yaakov weakens in his Torah, tefila, and general mitzvah observance, Esav will gain the upper hand. So when Am Yisroel is strong in Torah and Mitzvos, only then they will defeat Esav. In Sefer Chayim Vehaslom by the Rebbe of Munkatch,zt'l, this idea is brought out not only in actions but in thoughts as well. The *Erev Rav* among us as well philosophies that are against the Torah infiltrate and cause Am Yisroel to stumble.[Perhaps the Rebbe was referring to the many philosophies such as communism, socialism and other ideologies that brought into our ranks the ideas of Atheism, thus denying or even questioning Hashem's existence. Sadly, we know that in the 1800's and early 1900's so many Jews, *lo alienu*, fell into these ideologies.]

In verse 16 Hashem tells Moshe that Hashem will be at war with Amalek for all generations. Rashi states that the word used for throne is *kes* instead of *kisae* to denote that Hashem's throne is not complete till Amalek is wiped out. As long as Amalek is in existence Hashem's full glory cannot shine. Only when Amalek, in all of its manifestations, both external and internal, is vanquished will Hashem's throne be complete and will Hashem be crowned. Rabbeinu Bachaya expands on this idea with the *alef* missing and *heh* and *vav* from Hashem's name in this verse. He explains that at this point in our history, because of Amalek, it appears that there are other forces than Hashem. Therefore, Hashem in a certain sense is not complete in this world. But in the future it will be different. We are told in Tzephaniah 3:9 that all nations will call in Hashem's name. From every nation there will be those who survive this great judgment day. However, Amalek will completely cease to exist because of what he did to us early in our history. Only then will Hashem's throne be complete and his throne will be established. He will be recognized as the only one not only by Am Yisroel but by the entire world. Amalek will have no part of this as we are told at the end of Sefer Ovadiah, 'And the saviors will arise on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esav and to Hashem will be the sovereignty'. May we live to see this in the very near future. Amen.

