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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL!

PARSHAS VAYIKRA – ZACHOR

This Shabbos, we have a mitzvah to hear Parshas Zachor being read from the Torah. The Torah exhorts us to always remember Amalek's evil and cruelty. They had no reason to attack us. All the other nations feared Hashem when they heard about all the miracles that Hashem had done when freeing us from Egypt. The nation of Amalek was the only nation that did not fear Hashem. They fought against us because we represent Hashem! The battle against Amalek is an eternal, ongoing battle, even in our time. When Moshiach comes, Hashem will eradicate all traces of this evil people.

Since the battle against Amalek is a battle throughout the ages, it is beneficial for us to know what causes Amalek to battle us. It is also exceedingly important to know what WE can do to weaken Amalek's power.

The **Kli Yakar** says that when Jews are at peace with Hashem and at peace with one another, then Amalek has no power at all. The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l adds, that when we don't have strife, we are also protected from other nations (Sefer Shmiras HaLashon, quoted in Biurei Chofetz Chaim on the Torah by Rabbi Yisroel Braunstein).

"He [Moshe] named the place Massah and Merivah because B'nei Yisrael had quarreled [Merivah] and because they had tested [Massah] Hashem, saying, "Is Hashem among us or not?" Amalek came and fought with [B'nei] Yisrael in Rephidim." (Shmos 17:7-8)

The **Kli Yakar** continues that the Jewish People quarreled with each other and against Moshe. They also questioned if Hashem was there to

help them. These two behaviors enabled Amalek to wage war.

The Jews complained against Moshe, demanding water, even though they still had some water. "*Refidim*", the name that the Torah gives for their location in the desert, at that time, hints as to why they had no water then. *Ref-idim*, is a contraction of *raf* and *yadayim*. This hints to the fact that their *yadayim*, their hands, were weakened, because they had weakened their Torah learning.

The Jews also questioned if Hashem was there to help them. (See **HaEmek Davar** who questions how the Jews could possibly have said this after having witnessed so many miracles. He says that the Jewish people wondered if Hashem would continue to perform daily miracles for them even after Moshe passed away.) Haman, a descendant of Amalek, wanted to annihilate the Jewish People. When he spoke to King Achashverosh, requesting permission to do so, he said that the Jews had failed in these same

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two areas. *“Haman said to King Achashverosh: “There exists a particular people, far-flung, widespread among the peoples in all the colonies of your realm. Their customs differ from those of all peoples, and they do not abide by his majesty’s bylaws; his majesty has nothing to gain by tolerating them.”* (Megilas Esther 3:8) The words of the pasuk, *“מְפֹזָר וּמְפֹרָד”*, scattered and separate, refer to the fact that the Jews were not unified with each other, and that they also separated themselves from Hashem.

The **Beis HaLevi** quotes the **Talmud** (Bechoros 5) that Hashem allowed Amalek to fight against us in the desert because of these two sins; The Jews weakened their Torah learning and questioned if Hashem was in their midst.

The **Ohr HaChaim** says that Hashem allowed Amalek to fight against the Jews as a punishment for having neglected Torah which is compared to both fire and water. The fiery sword of Amalek and the thirst for water were the punishments which fit the “crime”.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman zt”l ([Koveitz Ma’amarim](#), quoted in in [Biurei Chofetz Chaim on the Torah](#) by Rabbi Yisroel Braunstein) says that our best weapon against our enemies is to increase our Torah learning. He says that every Jew who learns a chapter of Mishnayos or a page of Gemorah weakens the power of Amalek and has a share in the mitzvah of eradicating Amalek. This helps protect us even more than military strategies.

During the war with Amalek, *“When Moshe raised his hand, [B’nei] Yisrael prevailed; but when he let his hand down [to rest] Amalek prevailed.”* (Shmos 17:11). The **Chofetz Chaim** zt”l points out that it says, *“כִּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה”*, *“When Moshe will raise his hand”*, in the [future tense](#). Moshe raising his hand refers to the strengthening of Torah. This teaches us that, even in the future, when we strengthen our Torah learning, *“וַיִּגְבַּר יִשְׂרָאֵל”*, *“[B’nei] Yisrael prevailed”*; We will overcome Amalek.

We should not underestimate the importance of Jewish unity and the importance of our Torah learning. They bring us closer to each other and to Hashem. They also protect us from ALL our enemies!

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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