

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Chukat	13 July 2019	10 Tammuz 5779	Num. 19:1-22:1	Judges 11:1-33	John 19:38-42

In Bemidbar 21:1 says, “And the Canaanite, the king of Arad, who dwelt in the South, heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atharim; and he fought against Israel, and took some of them captive.” The Amalek attacked the Children of Yisrael twice: once when they left Mitzrayim and were on their way to receive the Torah, and here as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. In the first attack, the Amalek did not disguise themselves, but in this verse, they altered their dialect to speak like Canaanites.

When Aharon died, the Cloud of Glory left the camp of Yisraelites. The Amalek saw this as an opportunity to attack them. They reasoned that since the Cloud of Glory left, the protection was removed from the Yisraelites. We learned that when Aharon died, the Shekinah (Cloud of Glory), unlike Miriam’s well, left and never returned again. Thus, the Amalekites believed this was the right moment to attack. They also disguised themselves so that when the Yisrael does counterattack, they would attack the Canaanites rather than them.

Allegorically, Amalek is the element of doubt that cools the enthusiasm we are supposed to feel toward Hashem and our Divine mission. In this sense, our inner Amalek does not oppose receiving the Torah, only our excitement about it. He argues that learning the Torah is an intellectual endeavor. He argues against our passionate commitment to Hashem’s laws even before we have learned what they are.

So how do we approach the Torah? We are to approach it with warmth and enthusiasm that flow naturally from relating to it as Hashem’s will and wisdom. For without it, like “fiery serpent”, we will burn away our interest in the Torah and squanders away our energies on diversions and lifestyle that seek immediate gratification.

If the inner Amalek fails, like the king of Arad who disguised as a Canaanite which symbolizes the material world, he argues, “I have no quarrel with you studying the Torah or praying to Hashem. But when you enter the material world, you have to forget all of that and live by my rules.” Therefore, he “took some of them captive.”

Hashem commanded King Saul to wipe out the Amalekites, but because he did not listen (inner Amalek) to Hashem, it brought many disasters. Haman, in the book of Ester almost annihilated the House of Yahudah who were in exile.

Even though, the Amalek concedes to our study of the Torah, or a spiritual private life, his goal is to wipe out those who follows the will of Hashem. We, those following the will of Hashem, is to constantly renew our enthusiasm for Hashem and His Torah, and our desire to assume its rightful role as our guide in all aspects of life.¹

Yisrael, then vowed a generic vow as they saw the Canaanites had Amalek features, “And Israel vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said: 'If Thou wilt indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities.'” (Bemidbar 21:2) Since, there was nothing Yisrael can give as an offering to Hashem from Amalek, they destroyed everything, including buildings, animals, and people. Thus, they called Chormah (Hormah, “Dedication/Destruction”).

¹ Likutei Sichot, vol. 1, pp. 208-213

Aharon's death and the battle with Amalek disheartened the people so much that they wanted to return to Mitzrayim. Therefore, they "journeyed from mount Hor by the way to the Red Sea." (ibid, v. 4) The Levites opposed this retreat, pursued, and battled with the Tribes at Moseirot until the Tribes decided the retreat and continue their journey to the Promised Land. They stayed in Moseirot to mourn for the death of Aharon for 30 days.

The verse 5 says, "And the people spoke against God, and against Moses." The Zohar² opens with R' Yitshak, "It happened on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house..." Esther fasted for three days and her body was weakened, and she existed as spirit without body, then Esther put on *malikut*, meaning she was clothed in the Ruach HaChodesh. She was able to attain it because she guarded her mouth as said, "Esther had not yet made known her kindred nor her people." (Esther 2:20)

Anyone who engages in evil speech or slander will suffer from that very speech. The Yisraelites sinned with their tongue by "speaking against Hashem and Moshe", so they were punished by the serpent, who had slandered Hashem in Gan Eden. The Zohar concludes that whoever guards his mouth and tongue is worthy of being clothed in the Ruach HaChodesh.

² Zohar, 3:183a-183b