

UNSTOPPABLE FORCE

by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

The final song of Moshe's life is read this week. Appropriate as a prelude to Yom Kippur, it talks about the great potential that the Jewish nation has within its very essence. Moshe tells us to "Remember the days of yore, understand the years of generation after generation. Ask your father, and he will relate it to you, and your elders, and they will tell you" (Deuteronomy 32:7-8). He reminds us of the glory days, when Hashem asked us to be His chosen people, accepting the yoke of Torah observance. But Moshe does not stop there. Using our tremendous capacity as a role of responsibility, he warns us of the calamitous effect if we waste or misuse our talents.

Despite the harrowing foreshadowing of disaster, however, the verses of misfortune contain a message of hope as well. Moshe once again warns us of Hashem's potential wrath; yet a blessing lies within his curse, defining the very essence of the physiological indestructibility of the Jewish nation.

In predicting calamitous repercussions of sin, Moshe speaks for Hashem and declares, "I shall accumulate evils against them. My arrows I shall use up against them." What does that mean?

Rashi explains the verse according to a Talmudic explanation in Tractate Sotah. "My arrows will come to an end, but they themselves will not come to an end."

The question is obvious. Is G-d's quiver limited? Can the L-rd ever be bereft of ammunition? How is it possible that the Heavenly arsenal, equipped with more power than an atomic armory, will spend its ammunition without achieving total annihilation?

Reb Yosef Friedenson, editor of *Dos Yiddishe Vort*, tells the story of how he and a group of friends were in a smithy shop in the iniquitous labor camp in the town of Starachowice. The camp was notorious, and though the overseer of the factory in which they worked, a man named Pape, treated them kindly, one mistake meant that a German guard would treat them as saboteurs and shoot them dead.

Assigned to the Herman Goering works one Shmini Atzeres, they were not told what their job was for that day. And so, to fulfill their holiday spirit, they broke out in a traditional song, *Ain Adir kaHashem, Ain Baruch k'ben Amram* (There is none as powerful as Hashem nor blessed as Moshe, the son of Amram).

Pape was shocked. Despite the torture the humiliation, and the endless poison-tipped arrows of the

Holocaust, these people were singing!

"Why are you Jews singing?" he asked incredulously. "Do you have it so good that you can sing?"

The group explained the words of the song to Pape, going through each stanza, including those that read, "there are no wise men like the scholars of the Torah, and there is no redeemer like Hashem."

Pape was astonished. "After all the torture that you have been through, do you really still believe this?" Immediately, one of the younger members of the group, not a particularly religious lad, jumped up with an emphatic, "Yes!" And then each member of the troupe shouted their endorsement as well. "Of course! Surely! Without doubt!" One by one, each of those in the work-force-turned-choir exclaimed his unyielding approval.

Pape soon understood that he was dealing with an indestructible people. He gesticulated wildly with both arms and declared, "I don't know how the Führer will ever get rid of you!" With that, he walked away and let them continue their relentless commitment to their unshakeable, indestructible faith.

Noted scientist Isaac Asimov compiled a book of 3,000 interesting facts about the universe, history, and science. In it he deals with a longstanding question: "What would happen if an irresistible force met an immovable body?" Asimov explains that the question is ludicrous. He simply explains a physical fact. "In a universe where one of the above conditions exists, by definition the other cannot exist."

And so the Torah tells us something about the promise that Hashem made to His people. They are an immovable object. Hashem's unremitting commitment for his children has declared Judaism impregnable. And so the physical arrows He may send to chastise them cannot forever continue. They must eventually expire. As long as we understand the immovable body of the Rock of our faith, we are assured that there no longer exists an irresistible force to budge our eternity.

Good Shabbos ©2000 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Josh Kalter in memory of Helen Wincelberg -- In memory of Hadas bas Reb Chaim o"bm 7 Tishrei

Dedicated in memory of Tillie Beer by Ira and Gisele Beer -- 30 Nisan

If you would like to be on a shiur update list which sends messages regarding Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky's various lectures in NY City and LongIsland and other locations, please send a blank email tormkshiur-subscribe@jif.org.il You will receive bulletins about those classes.

If you want to be on a shiur announcement faxlist, fax request along with your fax number (dedicated line, please) to 516-569-7954

Copyright © 1998 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc.

If you enjoy the weekly Drasha, now you can receive the best of Drasha in book form!

Purchase **Parsha Parables** - from the Project Genesis bookstore - **Genesis Judaica** - at a very special price!

The author is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore.

Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a weekly torah facsimile on the weekly portion which is sponsored by ***The Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation***

Books by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky:

