

ULTIMATE VICTORY IS PROMISED

by Rabbi Label Lam

And Amalek came and battled with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us people and go do battle with Amalek. I will stand at the head of the hill with the staff of G-d in my hand...It's a war for Hashem with Amalek from generation (to) generation." (Shemos 17:8-9-15)

Choose for us. For me and for you! He (Moses) equated himself to him (Joshua). From here our sages learn to say, "The honor of your student should be as dear to you as your own. The honor of your friend should be to you as the reverence for your Rebbe...The reverence of your Rebbe should be as the awe of heaven. (Rashi)

With a careful reading of the text we are treated to such a handsome lesson in human relations. Everybody, starting from the top down is to offer an upgraded measure of honor and reverence for his students, colleagues and teachers. For sure, if carried out consistently and universally this simple maxim would help create a rich and fibrous bond between all of people in an unbreakable way. The only question though is, "Why is this address the one for this poignant point?" Why is it parked here next to the battle with Amalek?

It must have been clear to Moses from the beginning of the surprise attack that Amalek was not a one-time combatant. Israel had not violated their territory or provoked them in any way. This was an open offensive against what Israel had now come to represent to the entire world. They were as a tall flag, waving in the wind, high above the nations proclaiming the power and presence of The Almighty.

That Amalek was willing to destroy itself in this suicide mission only to stain that flag and diminish its status indicated that they are as passionate to undo the Name of the Almighty as we are to declare His Unity! That they found the weakest moment and the most vulnerable ones to attack sent a powerful signal. We need nothing less than eternal vigilance.

Rabbi Yitzchok Hutner, in his writings Pachad Yitzchok, explains that it is entirely appropriate here to learn the secret to forging unbreakable bonds between parents, children, teachers and colleagues on all levels. In a relay race the most delicate procedure is the point of contact when the baton is being passed from runner to runner. A mishandling and a fumble could make the entire difference between victory and defeat.

Moses understood what has been confirmed in scripture and subsequently through our bitter historical experience that this is a battle for all time. It's not enough to win in "the now". We must win

the war in the farthest future. Moses and his teachings must stand on "the head of the hill" not just today but "tomorrow" as well. How is that long term war to be fought effectively over the course of generations?

There is a profound need for a powerful web of interconnectedness between each and every caring person and especially at the contact points where generations interface. Therefore, the text may be understood to mean that we are locked in a battle not only in each generation but at that delicate and most vulnerable point of generation to generation.

It is known that as a young man, Rabbi Aaron Kotler was a beloved disciple of Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, known affectionately as the Alter from Slobodka. He used to engage Reb Aaron in Torah conversations that lasted late into the night. So that his student would not be afraid to walk home at such hours Reb Nosson Tzvi would escort him through the side streets of Slobodka to the main road. There he would stand and call loudly after his student to dispel his fear until he entered his house.

It's impossible to measure the future impact of that investment of time and caring. How much fear did Reb Aaron dispel in his lifetime? The sainted Chofetz Chaim is reported to have said regarding The Alter, "I write books. Reb Nosson Tzvi creates people." It is in this type of creative activity that ultimate victory is promised.

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