

THE ENEMY WITHIN AND WITHOUT

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

No matter how many times we read this week's parsha and re-witness the going out from Egypt, there is still a sense of relief and elation each time. "

We made it! We're out! The most powerful nation in the world has been humbled, and the most humble nation in the world has become powerful ..."

Well, at least for the time being. As we will find out the hard way, though we may have conquered Egypt, we had yet to conquer ourselves, and that was going to result, eventually, in forty years of wandering in the Sinai Desert.

One of the main reasons we couldn't quite make it from Point A (Egypt) to Point C (Israel; Point B was Har Sinai) on schedule was the Erev Rav-the Mixed Multitude-that left with the newly freed Jewish nation. As the midrash points out, it was the Mixed Multitude that was the thorn in Moshe's and the nation's side, eventually causing Moshe to sin by hitting the rock as opposed to speaking to it and lose the opportunity to enter the Land (Parashas Chukas).

The truth is, they weren't supposed to go along with the Jewish people in the first place. G-d had told Moshe not to take them along, warning him about the trouble they would cause Moshe if they left with the Jewish people. However, Moshe insisted upon bringing as many people under the "wings" of the Divine Presence as possible, and prevailed against G-d's warning.

Lesson #1: Never second-guess G-d.

Who were the Erev Rav anyhow?

First of all, we have it on tradition that every time the Torah refers to ha'umm (the people; heh, ayin, mem), it is referring to the Erev Rav ("umm" itself refers to the Jewish people; ayin, mem). The first time we see this usage is back at the beginning of Parashas Shemos, Chapter 1, Verse 20:

G-d dealt well with the midwives, and the people (ha-umm) multiplied, and become very mighty.

According to the Arizal, the Erev Rav were Egyptian converts to "Judaism" (or at least what they saw of it through Ya'akov and his family). They lived in a community of their own, and did not act like the rest of the Egyptians around them. Paroah knew about them, but was less concerned about them

than the real sons of Ya'akov and their descendants. According to the Arizal, Paroah felt that they would return back to Egyptian ways after the Jewish people had been "appropriately" dealt with.

In fact, according to the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh on the first verse of this week's parsha, the reference to ha-umm refers to the Erev Rav, who had been sent along with Moshe and the Jewish people-by Paroah. He had done this so that they could act as spies and to sow dissension among the Jews, to make sure they would want to return to Egypt after serving G-d in the desert for three days. They certainly acted their part (they were the ones to antagonize Moshe at the Red Sea and just about everywhere else)!

But why would any Egyptian, in advance of the plagues, want to convert to Judaism?

The answer to this question also comes from the Arizal, but it is a little beyond the scope of this parsha page to go into such (Kabbalistic) detail. In short, the Erev Rav were Egyptians who possessed special souls that had been reincarnated several times, on their way to becoming fully rectified for something that had gone wrong during Adam HaRishon's lifetime. Moshe knew this, and this is why he had hoped to finish the process by bringing them along with the Jewish people.

In fact, says the Arizal, Yosef knew about them too. This is why, during the years of famine, Yosef did the most bizarre thing: he had all the Egyptians circumcized if they wanted to be fed from the Egyptian storehouses (see Bereishis 41:55; Rashi). Why would Yosef do that? What did Yosef want to do, convert the entire Egyptian population to Judaism? Wouldn't that have been a little ambitious of Yosef?

The Arizal explains that Yosef knew about these "special" souls, and that their rectification was important to the correction of Adam's own sin, and he had therefore tried to start the process of "freeing" these souls. His effort had not been wasted, for bris milah certainly helped matters. However, it had been Moshe's effort to complete the process that had been somewhat premature. As a result, rather than become purified among the Jewish people, they "infected" the national psyche of the Jewish nation, especially when they constructed the golden calf at the foot of Har Sinai!

The impact of the Erev Rav has been immeasurable. Not only did they cause the Jewish nation to leave the desert 40 years later with an incompleated mission, their viewpoint has shaded Jewish clarity since. Ultimately, it is this that has been the source of every Jewish downfall because it was their mentality that rooted in the Jewish people the potential to be able to completely rebel against G-d ... Even to campaign against such central mitzvos as Bris Milah, which defines the very nature of the Jewish relationship to G-d!

It is no secret (at least to those "in-the-know") that thousands of years of Jewish suffering has been to expunge the Erev Rav from Jewish consciousness, to purge this "element" from the Jewish people. Though the Erev Rav may not physically exist today, they do in spirit, one which runs contrary to the very reason for which we were redeemed from Egypt; a spirit which may lie, at least

in part, in the heart of many an unsuspecting Jew.

Shabbos Day:

The following is an excerpt from an upcoming book which will be previewed over the Internet through Project Genesis over the upcoming weeks. It is called, "From Redemption to Redemption." It has been adapted for this week's parsha sheet.

The first attack by Amalek (Shemos 17:1) occurred just prior to the Jewish people's arrival at Har Sinai, in a place called Refidim. But, as we know from tradition, many of the names given to the camps during the forty years in the desert had more to do with what occurred there spiritually, than physically.

Rebi Chanina said, "I asked Rebi Eliezer in the big Bais Medrash ... 'What does Refidim mean?' He answered me, 'That was its name.' ... Rebi Yehoshua said, "[It means] they became weak (reefu) in Torah." (Bechoros 5b)

And that is why Amalek attacked them. (Rashi)

As one would expect, if Amalek is equated with doubt, then he only can exist in a Torah-less environment. Amalek is like a spiritual "bacteria." Bacteria does not grow in a sterile environment, such as in a hospital, but in one that has become unclean. As long as an effort is made to keep the environment clean (and it does require constant effort because of entropy), bacteria is kept in check. However, should the hospital cleaning crew fail to maintain the sterility for but one day, and allow nature to take its course, then the bacteria will grow and spread-like wildfire!

The same idea is true in the spiritual realm as well. As long as the Jewish people make the effort to stay connected to Torah, to maintain its "freshness," then the world remains spiritually "sterile," and Amalek is kept at bay. However, as the Talmud makes clear, should the Jewish people relinquish their hold on Torah but for a moment, and just treat it with less respect, then Amalek also grows like "wildfire," the likes of his damage we have already witnessed.

This was exactly what happened in the desert, as the Talmud explains:

The entire people traveled from the Sin Desert on the word of G-d, and they camped in Refidim; there was no water for the people to drink. The people argued with Moshe, and they said, "Give us water so we can drink!" (Shemos 17:1)

There is no water except Torah. (Babba Kamma 82a)

The point of Torah is to raise a person to the level of intellectual and spiritual clarity-G-d's clarity-and Amalek is the antithesis of this. That is why, more than any other nation that has ever caused the

Jewish people to suffer, it is only Amalek against whom G-d has waged war:

... G-d will be at war with Amalek for all generations." (Shemos 17:15)

The nation was heavily criticized for their complaint, and was accused of testing G-d. They even questioned the presence of G-d among them, in spite of all they had witnessed, and, the next verse indicates G-d's response:

Amalek came and did battle against Yisroel in Refidim.

The question is, was Refidim the cause, or a symptom? Did the Jewish people begin to "unravel" when they arrived at Refidim, or did matters take a turn for the worse before arriving in Refidim?

If we reverse in the parsha a little, we find that the episode before this incident of complaining was that of the munn, the heavenly bread that fell each day for the Jewish people throughout their forty years in the desert:

B'nei Yisroel ate the munn (heh-mem-nun) for forty years in the desert until they came to an inhabited land ... (Shemos 16:35)

Interestingly enough, the word ha-munn (the munn) and Haman share the same Hebrew spelling: heh-mem-nun. It wouldn't take too great a stretch of the imagination to find a connection between the two, considering that Amalek, the tribal ancestor of Haman, attacked in the very next parsha.

The correlation is subtle, but central, and comes down to the difference between two words that, on the surface, mean the exact same thing. In fact, if the Talmud hadn't pointed out the dramatic difference between the two words, more than likely we would not have taken notice of their usage.

G-d told Moshe, "I am going to rain bread for you from heaven, and the people will go out each day and collect it, so that I can test you, to see if you'll keep My Torah or not. On (ve-hayah) the sixth day they should prepare that which they will bring; there will be twice the amount they collect daily." (Shemos 16:4)

As we learn from the Torah, the munn fell each day in the quantity of one omer (about two quarts) per person. The Jewish people were commanded to collect no more and no less than the specified omer. If a person collected more than an omer, the surplus rotted; if a person took less than an omer, then the balance appeared on its own.

The exception to the rule, as mentioned above, was Friday. Since G-d did not allow the munn to fall on Shabbos in order to honor it, the Shabbos portion had to be collected erev Shabbos, on Friday. Thus, on this day, the second omer of munn did not rot, and the Torah describes the nation's reaction to this miracle:

On (va-yehi) the sixth day they collected the double portion of bread, two omers; the leaders of the people reported it to Moshe. He said to them, "This is what G-d said ... It is a Shabbos, a holy

Shabbos to G-d ... " (Shemos 16:22)

From the above verses, we can see that the miracle of the double portion had caught the Jewish people and their leaders by surprise. This prompted them to come before Moshe and ask, "What's going on here? Why hasn't the surplus of munn rotted like every other day?" to which Moshe responded, "This is what G-d said ..."

Apparently the discovery of the miracle preceded the foretelling of it, and for this reason, there is a nuance of difference between the two verses cited above. In the first verse in which G-d tells Moshe of the impending miracle, it begins: ve-hayah. However, in the second verse about their collecting the Shabbos portion, it begins: va-yehi.

The Talmud explains the difference between these two words as follows: ve-hayah alludes to joy and va-yehi indicates sadness. Hence, the verse of when Moshe learns of the double portion begins on a happy note, whereas the verse that records the realization of the miracle begins on a sad note.

But why this difference? The following alludes to the reason why:

G-d said to Moshe: How long will you not believe in Me and not keep My mitzvos and Torah? (Shemos 16:28)

A common parable states: With the thorn the cabbage is also stricken; the righteous are disgraced through the evil. (Rashi)

The above criticism of G-d was leveled at the Jewish people and Moshe Rabbeinu for trying to collect munn on Shabbos, in spite of the fact they had been told that none would fall that day. However, is it possible to imagine for a moment that Moshe tried to collect munn on Shabbos, G-d forbid? Of course not, and this is why Rashi adds that unfortunately, since Moshe found himself among the rebellious, he had to bear the brunt of their transgressions as well.

However, it's not so obvious that Moshe was an innocent bystander in the profanation of Shabbos by the people. Perhaps Moshe was meant to be included in the criticism for his role in the whole episode. For, had Moshe informed the Jewish people of the miracle of the double portion of munn in advance, then everything could have, would have been different-not just then, but throughout all of Jewish history.

This is because there were two ways to bring about the double portion of munn. The most obvious way was to physically collect two omers; the miracle would have been that the second omer didn't rot as it normally did. The second way is far more dramatic: as you collect the first omer, say the words lechovod Shabbos Kodesh-this is for the honor of Shabbos-and watch one omer of munn become two omers on its own.

This is what Moshe was supposed to have told them before they collected the munn on erev Shabbos.

A miracle such as this, one totally outside the realm of natural phenomena, would have transformed the entire nation; no one would have gone looking for munn on Shabbos. Such an experience would have definitely brought greater joy than physically collecting the two omers of munn, for it would have elevated the Jewish people out of the realm of physicality and into the realm of the supernatural. For, each and every Jew would have accomplished a physical task (creating the extra omer) through a spiritual means (i.e., speech) alone!

Instead, not knowing the miraculous power of speech they possessed, the collectors of munn erev Shabbos had worked only through the physical world. As a result, the double portion of munn could only be a phenomenon in the eyes of the nation, as opposed to a clear example of direct Divine Providence as it ought to have been. And, as the Torah makes clear, even a minimal reduction of such clarity can leave the Jewish people vulnerable to an attack from Amalek-and doubt.

Is it any wonder then, that the same nation that had decimated the most powerful nation on earth at that time, Egypt, without even lifting a finger, now had to fight a smaller nation by lifting up conventional arms to do battle? And is it any wonder then, that the mighty leader, who had been the vehicle to destroy that powerful nation, and who had done so by merely raising his staff into the air, now had to trudge up the mountain, and remain with his arms in the air to defeat Amalek, and with the assistance of others, yet?!

The message is very clear: cross the spiritual threshold into the world above nature, and you are untouchable by Amalek. Remain in the physical world of Amalek, and know that you will be subject to doubt, and an onslaught from Amalek. The Shabbos munn had represented such an opportunity to cross that threshold, perhaps forever. However, it was an opportunity not taken by the Dor HaDayah-the Generation of Knowledge-and Amalek was the result. It was this that led to the lack of water, that is, the lack of Torah and the resulting doubt, and war with Amalek.

Seudos Shlishi:

One of the biggest wonders of all time has to be how Paroah sent his army down into the Red Sea after the Jewish people. After all, Egypt had just been decimated by ten awesome plagues, and the Jewish people had been left untouched (except for the 4/5ths of the Jewish population that had died in the Plague of Darkness for not wanting to leave Egypt; but the Egyptians never saw that or their burial). Looking at things from where we stand, it was ludicrous, a cruel game of Russian Roulette ... outright national suicide to send the troops in. But Paroah did it anyway.

Of course, the only rational explanation for Paroah's absurd and reckless action was Divine Providence. After all, a Pillar of Fire had separated the Egyptians from the Jews by night, and a Pillar of Cloud protected the Jews by day. It could have been that it was the Egyptian G-d who had pulled

off the sea-splitting to trap the Jews for the Egyptians (though it split into twelve lanes, one for each of the twelve tribes!). However, why risk it? The answer is: direct Divine Providence hardened the hearts of the Egyptians so that they could not see life rationally. Egypt as it had existed until then was meant to come to an end.

The Ba'al HaTurim writes on Chapter 14, Verse 4 of this week's parsha:

[G-d told Moshe,] "I will strengthen the heart of Paroah so that he will chase after them, and I will be honored through Paroah and his army so that Egypt will know that I am G-d [Hashem]." And they did exactly that. (Shemos 14:4)

Twice [it says that "G-d strengthened ..."], here and the other place is, "G-d strengthened the limbs of the king of Babylonia ..." (Yechezkel 30:24), because The Holy One, Blessed is He, strengthens the heart of the evil to eradicate them from the world. (Ba'al HaTurim)

In other words, the tremendous chutzpah that we see in some people, like Saddam Hussein for example, may leave us wondering,

"How is it possible? How can one man, or an entire nation be so maniacal as to take on the entire "Coalition Army" (in the Persian Gulf War of 90/91), or the American People now? Don't they know they're playing with fire, or better yet, with dynamite? Do they have a death wish or something?"

However, we see from this week's parsha that this is the way G-d pushes them "over the top," to begin their quick descent into oblivion. Fascinatingly enough, the verse quoted by the Ba'al HaTurim refers to the king of Babylonia, Nebuchadnezzar, and of whom Saddam Hussein was quoted as saying that he is a reincarnation (Newsweek)!

And as I mentioned last year, it was during the week that this week's parsha was read in 1991, after the first Iraqi scuds fell on Israel, within which Moshe told the Jewish people:

"Do not be afraid! Stand still! and see the salvation of G-d, which He will show you today. For, the Egyptians you see today you will never see again. G-d will fight for you, and you shall be silent!" (Shemos 14:13)

... that George Bush asked the Israeli Government to refrain from entering the war against Iraq, after which he told them that the Americans would defend them against the Iraqi onslaught! Of all the coincidences ...

From this we see that when leaders do things that baffle the minds of the (Jewish) public, especially when the particular leader's history intertwines with that of the Jewish people, it is a sign that G-d is directly involved. And though it may look bad for the Jewish people at first when "enemies" act brazen-faced towards us and all that we stand for as nation, we can take heart. For, it is their steep rise in power that will eventually give way to their perilous decline to nothingness. It's just a matter of time.

Melave Malkah:

What G-d fearing Jew, when confronted by a terrifying and seemingly impossible situation, wouldn't throw a prayer up heavenward to invoke Divine intervention? Is that not the Jewish way? Has that not been the way of our forefathers have always acted? Yet, when Moshe stood with his back to the sea and facing the impending Egyptian attack, and looked heavenward with a prayer for help, G-d answered him:

"What are you praying to Me for? Just tell the Jewish people to go!" (Shemos 14:15)

Fine! We'll move! But what's wrong with offering a little prayer up before walking into a raging sea that has the potential to drown us all?

The Nefesh HaChaim answers this question. In his classic work of the same name, he explains that G-d was trying to communicate to Moshe that sometimes the missing factor that leads to peril is not prayer, but trust in G-d. In fact, says the Nefesh HaChaim, G-d told Moshe, "You want Me to split the sea? It is you who must split the sea! When you walk into that sea trusting in Me and My Divine Providence, then the sea will split for you."

And that's exactly the way it happened. According to the midrash, when Nachshon ben Aminadav waded into the sea up to his neck, the sea split into twelve lanes, one for each of the twelve tribes! Now, this scenario may not repeat itself very often in history (we don't suggest you walk into a sea, lake, or even the bath tub expecting it to split); but the essential message is true for all the generations.

One of the greatest measures of closeness between two people is the level of trust they have for each other; it is the same between G-d and man. Sometimes the bind we find ourselves in is just to facilitate our finding out just how close to G-d we are, or better yet, how close we ought to be. If you believe that G-d runs the world, and all that He does "is for the good," that He is all-powerful, and most important of all, that He loves you, then what can go wrong?

The answer is obvious, you say: plenty-and our history proves it! But the truth is, as the book "Duties of the Heart" points out, that is only after the fact, after we have already abandoned our trust in G-d and His track record. Whoever you trust in, says "Duties of the Heart," measure-for-measure, G-d leaves you in its (fictitious) hands. To stop trusting in G-d is to abandon our relationship with Him and it is this that has led to the horrific events that stain our long and often tragic history.

On the other hand, to re-build that trust in G-d is to step into a whole different level of relationship, one on which the hand of G-d becomes increasingly clearer to us, and the miracles become ever more frequent. And the rabbis point out, as Moshiach comes closer to his day of arrival, it is this issue

that will become ever more prevalent for each individual Jew.

Have a great Shabbos.

Pinchas Winston

Copyright © by [Rabbi Pinchas Winston](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

Rabbi Winston has authored many books on Jewish philosophy (Hashkofa). If you enjoy Rabbi Winston's Perceptions on the Parsha, you may enjoy his books. Visit Rabbi Winston's [online book store](#) for more details! www.thirtysix.org