

DEATH IS NOT ENOUGH

by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

"The Canaanite king of Arad, who dwelled in the south..." (21:1)

After the passing of Aharon, the clouds of glory which offered Bnei Yisroel protection from their enemies departed.[1] The verse states that Arad, king of the Canaanites who lived in the south, rallied his forces and waged war against Bnei Yisroel. The nation that dwelled in the south is identified in Parshas Shelach as the Amalekites, Bnei Yisroel's sworn enemy, who were not a Canaanite nation.[2] Why then does the verse describe the nation living in the south as Canaanites? The Yalkut explains that the Amalekites, aware of Bnei Yisroel's power of prayer, disguised themselves in Canaanite attire and conversed with each other in the Canaanite tongue, hoping that when Bnei Yisroel pray for victory it would be against the Canaanites rather than the Amalekites. However, relates the Yalkut, their plans were thwarted when Bnei Yisroel noticed that their facial features were not consistent with their clothing and language. Therefore, Bnei Yisroel prayed that Hashem should deliver them from "the enemy that is attacking them", omitting the nationality of their antagonists.[3]

Rashi cites the Tanchuma which has a slightly different account of the events. According to the Tanchuma, Amaleik hoped to deceive Bnei Yisroel by conversing in a Canaanite language. Bnei Yisroel were confused as to the identity of their attackers for they still wore their Amalekite attire. Therefore, Bnei Yisroel did not identify their enemy by name in their prayers.[4] If the Amalekites were attempting to deceive Bnei Yisroel why did they not change their clothing to strengthen the deception?

In the last century Amaleik reared its ugly head in the form of the Nazis (ys"v). Not only were the Nazis bent on the annihilation of the entire Jewish people, but they invented many forms of ingenious techniques and devices by which to debase, dehumanize and ridicule us before killing us. Amaleik are not interested in only destroying Bnei Yisroel; they want to deprecate and ridicule us in the process. So great is their hatred that our destruction is not sufficient to squelch their enmity for us; they will only find satisfaction if we are psychologically crushed prior to annihilation.

The Midrash is teaching us that although the Amalekites were well aware that their ruse might be discovered since they did not dress in Canaanite attire, they were willing to take that risk. If they would have been successful in their deception, in addition to vanquishing Bnei Yisroel they would have made us look foolish as well. Prior to eliminating us they would have been able to point out our stupidity for not having identified them by their clothing. This form of self-destructive behavior is consistent with Amalekite actions against the Jews throughout history; they are willing to destroy

themselves in their maniacal attempts to hurt and degrade the Jewish People.[5]

- 1.Rosh Hashana 3a
- 2.13:29
- 3.Yalkut Parshas Chukas, See Yalkut First Printing
- 4.Tanchuma 18
- 5.See Rashi Devarim 25:18

We Did The Time

"Moshe sent emissaries from Kadesh to the king of Edom..."(20:14)

The most expedient route into Eretz Yisroel would take Bnei Yisroel through the territory of Edom, the descendants of Eisav. In order to avoid confrontation, Moshe sent a delegation to the king of Edom requesting the right of passage through his land. Moshe instructed his messengers to begin their dialogue with an account of the suffering which befell Bnei Yisroel at the hands of the Egyptians.[1] Rashi explains that Moshe's message to Edom was that a prerequisite for inheriting the land which was promised to Avraham was that his offspring would suffer exile and servitude under a foreign ruler. Whereas Bnei Yisroel had suffered and now deserved the inheritance, the children of Eisav had not done their share, although they too were offspring of Avraham. Therefore, since Bnei Yisroel had suffered on behalf of the children of Eisav as well, in the very least they should be granted permission to cross through the land of Edom unmolested.[2] What does Bnei Yisroel's suffering have to do with being granted access?

Furthermore, the implication is that since servitude was decreed for the offspring of Avraham, the children of Eisav were included in this decree. Since when do we refer to Eisav as offspring of Avraham? Chazal expound upon the verse "ki b'Yitzchak yikaray lecha zera" - "from Yitzchak will offspring be considered yours", saying "from Yitzchak, but not all of Yitzchak", i.e Yaakov, and not Eisav was considered a beneficiary of the covenant made with Avraham.[3]

When Avraham entered Eretz Yisroel at the age of seventy-five, the Torah records, "vehakenani az ba'aretz" - "The Canaanite was then in the land." [4] The next verse records Hashem telling Avraham, "To your offspring I will give this land." [5] Rashi explains the juxtaposition of the two verses in the following manner: Although at the time when Avraham entered Eretz Yisroel, the Canaanites, who were descendants of Noach's son Cham, were in the midst of conquering the entire land, Hashem assured Avraham that his offspring would inherit the land for it was apportioned to Shem, and not Cham. Since Avraham's children are Semites (of Shem), they have the right to the land.[7] Rashi appears to be saying that our right to the land is through our connection to Shem the son of Noach. This contradicts the perception that our right to the land is our connection to Avraham.

The answers to the aforementioned questions lie in understanding that there were two covenants which assured Bnei Yisroel of their right to Eretz Yisroel. The first covenant occurred when Avraham

was seventy years old, "The Covenant of the Parts", in which Avraham was assured that his descendants would inherit Eretz Yisroel. The territory described in the verse includes those of the ten nations on both sides of the Jordan extending to the Euphrates. Rashi notes that Bnei Yisroel received only seven of the lands. The final three would belong to Edom until Messianic times.[9] This "Greater Eretz Yisroel" was promised to Avraham's descendants, for he was the beneficiary of the legacy of Shem and therefore included Eisav. When Avraham was ninety-nine we find a second covenant, "The Covenant of Circumcision" which gave Bnei Yisroel exclusive rights to the land of the Canaanites, i.e. the seven nations, because of their connection to the Patriarchs.[10] This explains why prior to crossing the Jordan, Joshua instructed that all the males of Bnei Yisroel must undergo circumcision, for their connection to Eretz Canaan is through the Covenant of Circumcision.[11]

Therefore, Bnei Yisroel have two claims to Eretz Yisroel, their claim to the "Greater Eretz Yisroel" through their connection to Shem and their exclusive right to Eretz Canaan through their connection to Avraham. At the "Covenant of the Pieces" Hashem decreed that in order to inherit Eretz Yisroel, Avraham's offspring would have to undergo exile and servitude. This included all of Avraham's offspring, for it was for the right to claim the "Greater Eretz Yisroel". Therefore, Moshe sent a message to the king of Edom saying that Bnei Yisroel served their share of servitude as well as Edom's, and technically they could lay claim to the "Greater Eretz Yisroel" and Eretz Canaan. Nevertheless, all he wanted was the right of passage. By refusing, Edom relinquished their rights. However, Hashem instructed Bnei Yisroel to avoid confrontation until the Messianic times when the land will be annexed to Bnei Yisroel as part of a "Greater Eretz Yisroel".

1.20:15

2. See Rashi 20:14,15,16

3. Beraishis 21:12 See Nedarim 31a

4. Beraishis 12:

5. Ibid 12:7

6. Rashi 12:6

7. 15:7-21 See Tosafos Berachos 7b

8. 15:18-21

9. Rashi ibid See Isaiah 11:14

10. 17:1-14

11. Joshua 5:2-8