

Where is Amalek today?

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March 7, 2012



For those of us who have been keeping up with the news, there has been much talk about the symbolism of Iran, Saudia Arabia and Americaand the potential for nuclear crisis. Many have pointed out the Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshaya 59*) that states in reference to the war of Gog and Magog:

Rabbi Yitzchak said: At the time of the revelation of the Mashiach, the kings of all the nations challenge one another. The king of Persia [possibly Iran] challenges the king of Arabia [possibly Saudia Arabia], and the king of Arabia goes to Aram or Edom [possibly America] to seek their counsel. The king of Persia arises again and lays waste the whole world, and all the nations of the world are distressed and frightened and fall on their faces, and they are seized by pains like birth pangs. Yisrael, too, is distressed and frightened and asks, "Where shall we turn?" And HaShem answers them, "My children! Do not be afraid. All that I have done, I have done only for your sake. What are you afraid of? The time of your redemption has come."

Although I am hopeful that we are indeed approaching the Messianic era and pray that we should merit ushering it in peacefully, I have yet to find the authority who can interpret with absolute clarity this Midrash and other similar sources. In fact, I have witnessed quite the opposite occur over the

years. Every once in a while, rumors start circulating that such and such an event is going to take place, and these rumors are proven wrong time and time again. The unfortunate outcome is that many begin to doubt our belief in the coming of the Mashiach.

This is certainly not what Rebbe Nachman had in mind for us; quite the opposite. The proper attitude, it seems to me, is to look at these possible signs in an encouraging way and as a reminder that we must always be ready. One of the fundamentals of our faith is that the Mashiach could come at any given moment. Rebbe Nachman encouraged us to be *temimut* (sincere or wholesome), but not to be foolish!

There are some things, though, that we do know for certain. A fundamental teaching in Judaism and especially in Kabbalah is that every physical occurrence is rooted in a spiritual cause. On that note, Reb Noson clearly identifies today's spiritual Amalek in *Likutey Halakhot* (*Hilkhos Nachalos* 4):

"Haman represents the evil that seeks to overpower the Jews at the end of the Babylonian exile in order to postpone the redemption. He seeks to weaken Jewish hearts from praying to God, claiming that the promised time for redemption has already passed and the Jews are still in exile. Our Sages explain that even Daniel thought he had properly calculated the time of redemption and was mistaken. So Haman took advantage of the opportunity, claiming that all hope was lost.

"Haman proclaimed that the Jewish God is sleeping and therefore made himself into an idol, symbolizing the opposite of *emunah* (faith) and prayer. This, then, is the main war that we must fight against Amalek in every generation, and the cause of our prolonged exile."

Reb Noson goes on to explain that **God hears every single prayer** and it only seems as if He is sleeping. This is because, unfortunately, there are judgments out against the

Jewish people and HaShem must hide Himself. However, it is our job to “wake Him up,” so to speak, by arousing His compassion through our screaming and prayer.

If Amalek has the power to make us feel as if God is not listening, then the solution, according to Reb Noson, is to a) remember all the miracles that were done for the Jewish people throughout the ages and our miraculous survival, and b) remember our own personal salvations. Our prayer is only as strong as our *emunah* (faith) in it. Until we have prayed for something and been answered, we cannot properly believe in prayer. But once we have been answered, we need only remind ourselves of the awesome power of prayer and Amalek will be defeated.

Reb Noson notes: “Amalek is out to weaken our hearts at the end of the exile, at the time that the redemption is just waiting to happen. All we need is a few more prayers in order to awaken God’s compassion, and He will turn to us face to face.”

Amen, may these last prayers be said quickly and in our times, and maybe even on Purim or before, for that matter!

Purim Samei’ach!

A Freilichen Purim!