

## DARCHAI NOAM - דרכי נועם

### “Its ways are ways of pleasantness”

(Mishlei 3:17)

Parashat B'shalach  
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How can the Parasha help us grow this week?

### **B'shalach – How can we complete Hashem's Name and Throne?**

At the end of this week's Parasha of B'shalach we read about the first battle between Amalek and Bnei Yisrael. Amalek's land was not under threat and there was no prior battle between them and Bnei Yisrael. Their unprovoked attack against Bnei Yisrael was really an attack against Hashem. As Hashem's representative in the world, Yisrael represents the forces of good. Thus, the battle between Israel and Amalek is really the eternal battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil.

Moshe appointed Yehoshua to lead this first battle against Amalek. Moshe ascended to the top of a hill, with Aaron and Hur, and prayed for success. As long as Moshe's hands were raised in prayer, Bnei Yisrael would prevail over Amalek. The Mishnah<sup>1</sup> explains that as long as Bnei Yisrael looked heavenward and subjected their heart to Hashem, they would succeed.

Yehoshua won the battle, but that was not the end of Amalek. We have been battling Amalek through its many incarnations over the course of our history – including the wicked Haman, the Nazis, and even today, when Amalek is known as Hamas, Hezbollah or the brutal Iranian regime.

After that first battle, Hashem took an oath, placing His hand on His throne, so to speak, that He would continue the war against Amalek until that wicked nation is totally obliterated. Many of the commentators explain that the battle will continue until the times of the Mashiach, when Hashem will finally wipe out Amalek completely.

*“And he [Moshe] said, “For the hand is on Hashem's throne; Hashem will maintain a war against Amalek from generation to generation”<sup>2</sup>*

In referencing Hashem's throne, two abbreviations are used:

- Instead of using the word 'כסא', which means chair or throne, the pasuk refers to 'כס' without the 'א'.
- Instead of using Hashem's ineffable four-letter name, the pasuk uses just the first two letters ('י' followed by 'ה'). The last two letters of Hashem's name ('ו' and 'ה') are omitted.

The commentators explain that Hashem's name and throne are incomplete, so to speak, and will remain so until Amalek is finally wiped out in the times of the Moshiach.

The Kli Yakar<sup>3</sup> points out that the missing letters – א, ו and ה – spell the word 'אוה' which is the root of the word ta'avah, meaning desire. While it is commonly given a negative connotation, 'desire' is actually a neutral trait – one can desire something positive or something negative.

This word אוה is specifically linked with Hashem's choosing to dwell in Zion. We see this in a pasuk from Tehillim<sup>4</sup> which we recite each morning in Shacharit, during Pesukai D'zimrah<sup>5</sup>:

*“כי בחר ה' בציון, אוה למושב לו” – “For Hashem has chosen Zion; He desired it (אוה) for His dwelling place.”*

<sup>1</sup> Rosh Hashana 3:8.

<sup>2</sup> Shmot 17:16, the last pasuk in our Parasha.

<sup>3</sup> Commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim ben Aaron Luntschitz (c. 1550–1619), Chief Rabbi of Prague. See the Kli Yakar on Breishit 38:18, Parashat Vayeshev.

<sup>4</sup> Tehillim 132:13.

<sup>5</sup> Towards the end of the tefillah entitled 'יהי כבוד', shortly before Ashrei.

This can be understood homiletically, as: Hashem will dwell in Zion with אֱלֹהֵינוּ, or when the אֱלֹהֵינוּ is returned.

The missing letters thus give us a clue as to what is missing from Hashem's name and His throne and what is needed in order to bring His name and throne back to completion and back to His chosen dwelling place, in Zion. The missing letters spell אֱלֹהֵינוּ, desire. Our desire. In other words, if we really desire the redemption, it will come.

How can we strengthen and reveal our desire? If we desire something, we will yearn for it and pray for it. If we analyse the words of the Amidah that we recite three times a day, we will see that much of it is directly related to the geulah. For instance:

- First bracha (Avot): We praise Hashem Who “recalls the kindnesses of the Avot and **brings a redeemer** to their descendants.
- Second bracha (Gevurah): We mention **techiyat hamaitim** (resuscitation of the dead), which will take place after the coming of the Moshiach.
- Fifth bracha (Teshuva): We ask Hashem to **return us to His service**, which will take place when the Bet Hamikdash is rebuilt.
- Seventh bracha (Refuah): we ask for **complete recovery for all our ailments**. This is a reference to the times of the Mashiach when we will all be fully healed.
- The ninth bracha deals with the **ingathering of the exiles**, which is part of the process of the ultimate redemption.
- The tenth bracha (Restoration of justice): We ask for our **judges to be restored as in earlier times**. This refers to a restoration of the Sanhedrin, which will occur as part of the ultimate redemption.
- The 13<sup>th</sup> bracha deals with the **rebuilding of Jerusalem**, not just in a physical sense, but with Hashem's Presence dwelling there, which will take place in the times of the Mashiach.
- The 17<sup>th</sup> bracha, dealing with Avoda, asks Hashem to **restore the service in the Bet Hamikdash**, which will only take place after the ultimate redemption.

But the clearest reference to the Mashiach is in the 14<sup>th</sup> bracha of the Amida, which asks for the restoration of the Davidic reign, a direct reference to the Mashiach. This 14<sup>th</sup> bracha differs in a unique way from the others.<sup>6</sup> The other brachot of the Amida conclude with a summary of *Hashem's power* in relation to the theme of that bracha.<sup>7</sup> However, this 14<sup>th</sup> bracha is different – it concludes with ‘we hope for your salvation all day long’. This is unique in that it is an action on our part. It reminds us that we have to constantly hope and yearn for Hashem's salvation. And if we do, then it will come. This one is up to us.

We see that Chazal included multiple references to the ultimate redemption in our daily prayers. This is to engender in us a desire for the Moshiach, the time when Hashem's name and throne will be complete.

But what if we don't really feel a desire for the geulah? How can we stir up our desire? This is a big topic, but we can briefly suggest a few ideas. Firstly, we can ‘want to want’, i.e. we can daven and ask Hashem, that this becomes something that we genuinely desire. Secondly, we can learn about the times of Mashiach and how wonderful it will be. Thirdly, every time something negative happens, even a small disappointment, we can remind ourselves that this would not be happening if the redemption had already come.

If we can fire up our desire, our ‘אוה’, then we can play our part in completing the missing letters in Hashem's name and His throne. May that day come speedily!

Let's try something this week:

1. When davening, try to pay attention to the many references to the ultimate redemption.
2. Try to build up our desire for the redemption, and remember that our desire can hasten its arrival.

Shabbat Shalom, Rabbi Ledder

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<sup>6</sup> This is pointed out by Rav Meir Shapiro zt"l.

<sup>7</sup> The summary appears right at the end of each bracha, just before the words ‘Baruch Atah Hashem’.