



**5783 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein Parashat Tetzaveh / פרשת תצַוה /
Shabbat Zachor / שבת זכור**

Who Builds Yerushalayim?

This week we remind ourselves that our war against Amalek and other forms of evil is ongoing. It is a struggle. The Torah teaches us that this battle will last "from generation to generation"¹ until Mashiach comes and good triumphs over evil for once and for all.

Interestingly, this war begins in an unexpected manner. All throughout the journey in the desert, whenever the Jewish people experienced hardship, they always turned to God in prayer or complaint. By contrast, when they are attacked by Amalek, the first thing that occurs on the side of the Jews is that Moshe appoints Yehoshua to be the general. There is no divine command or direct input from God. This seems to be a story of human initiative with the lesson being that it is up to us, the Jewish people and human beings, to fight against evil.

But this is not the end of the story. During the fighting, the tide of the battle depends on the position of Moshe's hands which the Mishna interprets as being connected with the Jewish people's prayers.² At the end of the war God declares that the war between the Jewish people and Amalek is really a multigenerational war between God and Amalek. Thus, we see that God plays a major role in this battle with Amalek.

Thus, we see that the epic battle against evil requires an integration of two forces: human and divine. We cannot simply sit back and let God destroy evil, rather we must take the initiative and wage battle ourselves. Yet, simultaneously, we must pray for divine assistance.

The same holds true regarding the counterpoints to Amalek. God swears that his throne will not be complete until Amalek is defeated. The midrash identifies this throne as Yerushalayim, the

¹ Shemot 17:16.

² Mishna Rosh HaShana 3:8.



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seat of God's dominion in this world.³ The completion of Yerushalayim signifies the fall of Amalek and vice-verse.

Similar to our battle against Amalek, our building of Yerushalayim must take a multipronged strategy. On the one hand, we need to take the initiative. We must actively seek to rebuild and be sovereign in our city. The Vilna Gaon did not sit in exile and wait for redemption. Rather, he sent his students to buy land, build buildings and dwell in the city. We must continue that trend in whatever we can.

Simultaneously, though, we must recognize that our efforts alone will not suffice. In the end of the day, we are building God's city and we need His intervention and help in order to succeed. We will only be able to be God's agents in restoring the fullness of His throne when we recognize that even with our efforts we must always follow Moshe's hands up to heaven and pray for divine assistance. The building of Yerushalayim requires the integration of human initiative and divine assistance, precisely parallel to the defeat of Amalek.

³ Tanchuma Ki Teitzei siman 17