

The Attack on the Torah of Yerushalayim

In this week's parsha we read about the attack of the King of Arad against the Jews when they are nearing the Land of Israel. While at first the Jewish people are taken by surprise, they soon pray to God and are saved. Rashi notes that in truth the attack came from the nation of Amalek who dressed themselves in the manner of the people of Canaan in order to confuse the Jewish people.¹

This is the second time that Amalek attacked the Jewish people. Earlier, when the Jewish people were approaching Mount Sinai, Amalek also conducted a surprise attack. Then, too, the attack was initially successful but due to the prayer of Moshe and the Jewish people the Amalekites were rebuffed. What is the meaning of this pattern? Why did the Amalekites attack at these two junctures?

Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin² explains that the Amalekites were trying to prevent the Jewish people from receiving the Torah. Amalek realized that once the Jewish people would accept and internalize the Torah, they would be protected from any attack of the evil forces that they represented. Therefore, the Amalekites attack the Jewish people once they begin to approach the Sinai area where they were to receive the Written Torah.

Close to forty years later, the Jewish people are on the cusp of entering the Land of Israel. This is another point of receiving the Torah since the wisdom of the Oral Torah is most revealed in the Land of Israel and particularly in the city of Yerushalayim. As Rav Tzadok writes:

And afterwards, when the time came to enter the Land of Israel which is the main center of the Oral Torah as the verse states: "From Zion Torah shall emerge and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim." [The phrase] "the word of Hashem" refers to Halacha... [and the Sanhedrin sat in] Yerushalayim

¹ Rashi to Bamidbar 21:1.

² Pri Tzadik, parshat Zacho, siman 13.

Amalek attacked to prevent the Jewish people from receiving this special connection to the Oral Torah that emanates from Yerushalayim.

The Jewish people's prayers, however, thwarted the Amalek attempt. The Jewish people repelled the attack, entered the Land of Israel and reached Yerushalayim. There, we received the highest level of revelation of the Oral Torah. It was in Yerushalayim that the Sanhedrin, aided by a divinely inspired intuition, understood and taught the depths of the Torah's wisdom.

May we merit the full revelation of the Torah of Yerushalayim!