

zealously engage in *Ahavas Yisroel*, fighting against the causeless hatred that led to the destruction of the Temple and exile.

The Midianites – the Midian within each of us – seeks strife, discord and dissension. To achieve this goal, Midian tries to deceive us with the argument that only Jews like us, only “Levites,” deserve *Ahavas Yisroel*. But *Ahavas Yisroel*, an unconditional love for a fellow Jew, applies to every Jew. The war against Midian must be fought together, with and by all Jews, regardless to which “tribe” they belong. This unites us with the One G-d, and this is the retribution of G-d against Midian.

By taking revenge on Midian, we negate the cause of exile, baseless hatred. Our revenge, the vengeance of G-d, is but *Ahavas Yisroel*, unconditional love for a fellow Jew. This battle we must all fight. This battle we must win, for our victory in it hastens the coming of Moshiach.

(Based on Likkutei Sichos 23, pp. 206-213)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד **Shagalov**
Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
Reb Dovid Asniel ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה **Ekman**
Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
Mrs. Devora Rivka bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה **Marenburg**
Passed away on the second day of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
Reb Yitzchok Moshe (Ian) ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
Passed away on 24 Shevat, 5769
ת.נ.צ.ג.ה.
AND IN HONOR OF
Mrs. Esther Shaindel bas **Fraidel Chedva** שח"ו **Shagalov**
DEDICATED BY
Rabbi & Mrs. Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel שיח"ו **Shagalov**

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Reflections of Redemption

Essays on the Weekly Torah Reading and Moshiach,
Based on the talks of the
Lubavitcher Rebbe,
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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tribe of Levi. As Maimonides puts it, “Not just the tribe of Levi, but **every Jew** whose heart moves him and sets his mind to separate himself, can stand before G-d and serve Him.” In other words, every Jew has the ability to become holy, distanced from worldly matters. This attitude can even extend to involvement in the needs of others. It’s possible to reason that, since I have dedicated myself to the service of G-d, my primary concern, indeed my only concern, is my own spiritual welfare and that of my family, my fellow “Levites.”

The Torah tells us that when it comes to conquering the land of Israel, overcoming the seven nations – the seven emotional character traits – one may indeed be able to separate himself from the struggle. But when it comes to fighting against Midian, then just the opposite applies. This is a war in which the Levites not only may participate, but they must participate. In fact, the Levites have a particular obligation to fight against and nullify Midian, since Midian, by definition, opposes Oneness.

Spiritually speaking, each of the three types of wars represents a different stage in self-purification, and thus the rectification of the world. Each is a stage in the preparation for Moshiach. The seven nations of Canaan represent the seven emotional character traits, our animalistic desires. These need to be conquered and transformed. Amalek represents arrogance, egotism and selfishness. It must be destroyed.

Midian, however, represents baseless hatred. The very word means strife and contention, division and disunity. The way to battle dissension, is to take vengeance against it. Midian wants disharmony. It thrives on antipathy, animosity and malice. Vengeance demands we foster the opposite, promoting harmony, respect and devotion. No one is exempt from the battle against hostility. One cannot be a “Levite” and stand aloof when animosity threatens the unity of the Jewish people. Rather, every Jew must

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This is the war against Amalek, a war of utter destruction. The three wars, conquest, retribution and destruction, differ in how the enemy is treated and what is done with the property. In a war of conquest, the purpose is to take over the land; the inhabitants are allowed to flee. In a war of destruction, the purpose is annihilation; the inhabitants are allowed no escape. In a war of retribution, vengeance is taken against those involved, the instigators. Some inhabitants are killed, and others saved.

From this we see that the war against Midian fits in the middle: it has characteristics of the war against Amalek, a war of total destruction. It also has characteristics of the war against the seven nations of Canaan, a war of conquest.

This distinction also applies to the disposition of the property, the spoils of war. The property of the Amalekites was utterly destroyed, not even used for sacrifices. The property of the seven nations of Canaan was divided among those who fought. This excluded the tribe of Levi. From the property of the Midianites, however, a portion was given to the Levites.

The Levites were given part of the Midianite property because in this case, the tribe of Levi went to battle. When it came to conquering the land of Israel, the Levites were exempt from fighting the seven nations. They were separated to serve G-d, teaching Torah to the masses and maintaining the Sanctuary. They were G-d's forces, detached from worldly matters.

But since Midian opposed G-d, the Levites fought. The purpose of the war was to take revenge for G-d. Hence the Levites, dedicated to the service of G-d, participated in the war. And having participated, they were entitled to part of the spoils.

Since the participation of the Levites in the war against Midian was unique, it teaches us a unique aspect of our battle to bring Moshiach. In a general sense, every Jew can reach the level of the

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by
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Matos

THE WAR FOR AHAVAS YISROEL

The Torah portion speaks of two wars, against Midian and against the seven nations of Canaan, which had two different motives: vengeance and conquest. Elsewhere, the Torah speaks of a third war, that against Amalek, whom the Jewish people are commanded to annihilate. The three wars, conquest, retribution and destruction, differ in how the enemy is treated and what is done with the property. Each represents a different aspect of our war against the forces opposed to G-dliness and delaying Moshiach. The seven nations of Canaan are the seven emotional traits. Amalek is arrogance and ego. Midian is baseless hatred. The uniqueness of the war against Midian is that all Jews must fight, and take vengeance, by acting with Ahavas Yisroel.

This week's Torah reading speaks about two wars, the war against Midian and the war against the seven nations of Canaan. Each war had a different purpose. The Jewish people were commanded to fight against the Canaanite nations in order to conquer the land of Israel. The Jews fought against Midian because G-d told Moses, "Take revenge for the children of Israel against the Midianites." Thus the two wars, against Midian and against the seven nations of Canaan, had two different motives: vengeance and conquest.

This critical difference obviously affected the conduct of the war. The Canaanites were allowed to flee or make peace, while all male Midianites and all adult females were to be killed. The houses of the Canaanites were left intact, many of them to be occupied by the Jewish people. The houses, cities and dwellings of the Midianites were burned to the ground.

When the Torah records an event, with all its details, it does

so because even the details teach us about our Divine service. The word "Torah" means instruction; the Torah instructs us, by direct command or analogy, how to fulfill our Divinely ordained mission to make the physical world a dwelling place for G-dliness. The events of the Torah are a paradigm for the events of the final Redemption. Ideally, the Jewish people are to observe the mitzvos in the land of Israel. Just as the war against Midian was a prelude to settling the land of Israel, so too the battle against the present day Midian – our internal Midian – serves as a prelude to the coming of Moshiach.

The Torah juxtaposes the two wars, placing the instructions for the war against the seven nations immediately after telling us about the war against Midian. By doing so, the Torah invites a comparison. The contrast in the goal and conduct of the two wars reflects the purpose and methods of our spiritual battles. We have two types of struggles, against "Midian" and against the "seven nations of Canaan." We must struggle against Midian and Canaan personally, fighting our evil inclinations, negative character traits and the desires that obstruct G-dliness. We must also do so nationally, destroying the nature of "Midian" and conquering the "seven Canaanite nation-like" behavior of the world through our Torah and mitzvos.

On a personal level, both wars are part of the preparation for Redemption. We can readily understand the analogy with the war against the seven nations. As long as other nations lived in the land of Israel, had authority over it, the Jewish people could not truly settle the land. They had to establish a dwelling place for themselves in order to establish a dwelling place for G-d's Presence. Hence, we must battle the "seven nations" within us to bring the Redemption.

What of the war against Midian? How does taking vengeance bring Moshiach? To answer this, we must note a third type of war.