

And because of their test of Hashem, saying: “Is Hashem among us or not?” Amalek came and battled Yisrael in Rephidim. (17:7,8)

Klal Yisrael challenged Hashem to the point that a place is named for their contentious behavior. The name implies for all time that Hashem is always with us. Further, the name suggests that we should use prayer for expressing our needs, not complaint and challenge. *Rashi* explains the juxtaposition of the place that *Klal Yisrael* questioned Hashem's presence among them upon the location of the battle with Amalek. When they asked, “Is Hashem among us?”, Hashem sent Amalek as an indication that He was there watching every move, listening to every complaint, responding to every ingratitude. The *Midrash* analogizes this to a child who is carried around on his father's shoulders, while the father fulfills the child's every request. As they walk by a person, the child turns to the stranger and asks, “Have you seen my father?” This indignity annoys the father to the extent that he flings his son to the ground, where he is bitten by a dog. Now the son knows the father has been there the entire time. Likewise, after all the miracles and revelations which *Klal Yisrael* has experienced, they had the nerve to question Hashem's presence! Such *chutzpah* is countered by Hashem casting them off, leaving them exposed to their enemies.

In analyzing this *Midrash*, **Horav A. Hensch Leibowitz, Shlita**, infers that *Klal Yisrael* had no basis for asking such an impudent question. Why then did they ask? It would seem that they really questioned the Almighty's presence. But why? *Horav* Leibowitz suggests that the son had forgotten his father's presence, because he became so accustomed to him. It became like second nature, as his father provided for his every need and desire. It became so natural that he no longer realized that his father was supplying him with everything. *Klal Yisrael* likewise became accustomed to being on the receiving end. The Almighty took care of everything for them. They slipped into the habit of expecting their needs to be met. In this way, *Klal Yisrael* was similarly susceptible to forgetting who their benefactor was.

Horav Leibowitz derives two significant lessons from this *Midrash*: First, it is conceivable for a person to sin, although he has no reason or desire to do so. *Klal Yisrael* challenged Hashem without cause. Nothing motivated their insolence and manner. Second, we see that a person can become so accustomed to experiencing miracles that he forgets their source. *Klal Yisrael* was surrounded by miracles. Their very existence was clearly a miracle. Yet, they had to be reminded that their lifestyle should be attributed to Divine grace and that gratitude should be extended to the Almighty. These are powerful lessons whose application is relevant to us.