

And Bnei Yisrael went out from the land of Egypt, (well) armed. (13:19)

What benefit did the Jewish slaves – now turned free men – have from the weapons which they brought with them from Egypt? The commentators interpret *chamushim* as armed. This then provides proof positive that when *Bnei Yisrael* battled Amalek they had weapons to use against the enemy. Having weapons and knowing how to use them are quite different matters. Perhaps by the time Amalek attacked them, they had already trained somewhat in weaponry and battle. What would men who knew nothing but slavery for 210 years do with weapons? Why did they take something with them that they did not know how to use?

We must, therefore, conclude that armed has a different meaning. The faithful Jew is acutely aware that success or failure has nothing to do with physical prowess or state-of-the-art weaponry. It is all in the hands of Hashem. If we merit – we triumph. If we do not merit – or Hashem feels that this is not a time for success – we do not triumph. *Klal Yisrael's* weapons were their faith in Hashem. True, they required the Giving of the Torah and a forty year sojourn in the wilderness, completely relying upon Hashem's beneficence for survival, to achieve the pinnacle of faith which guided their lives when they entered *Eretz Yisrael*. *Hashgachah pratis*, Divine Providence, for those who faithfully obey His *mitzvos*, was capable not only of saving them from destruction, but also of ensuring their day to day survival – no matter what challenges they might have encountered. The spiritual education garnered through forty years of wandering in the Wilderness provided them with the curriculum for this successful transition from slave to independent member of *Klal Yisrael*.

Bnei Yisrael did not enter the wilderness spiritually bereft of faith. They had “weapons”; they had proven in Egypt that they were capable of rising to the challenge of the wilderness. They had manifest faith in Hashem while still in Egypt. This was their weaponry. It is related (*Haggadah Chashukei Chemed*) that every year on the *Seder* night, the saintly *Chasam Sofer, zl*, would raise his voice and say to his children the following: “My children and grandchildren, listen carefully. Prior to the Exodus our People experienced two *nisyonos*, tests, and these two tests will (also) be the final two *nisyonos* prior to the ultimate Redemption, with the advent of *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*.

“The first *nisayon* was one of money/wealth/material abundance. During the plague of *choshech*, darkness, *Klal Yisrael* was exposed to the enormous wealth of their Egyptian oppressors. Needless to say, they became obsessed with a burning desire to grab whatever they could as a form of revenge against these miserable, cruel despots, who had mercilessly persecuted them for over two centuries. What held them back from losing it? What prevented them from ransacking the Egyptian homes? Their faith in the Almighty, their belief in His promise that, in the end, they would leave this miserable country with tremendous treasure.

“The second *nisayon* was one of fear. On that night, the Jews hiding in their homes heard blood-curdling screams, shrieks of pain and misery, emanating from the Egyptians who witnessed their

firstborn sons dying before their eyes. The Jews were unaware of the nature and source of these screams: were they only from Egyptian homes, or were Jewish homes also being affected by the plague?

“Nonetheless, in spite of their fear, they listened to Hashem’s command and did not leave their homes until the morning. They believed and trusted in Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s word that the chilling screams which they heard were the result of – and reaction to – the deaths of the Egyptian firstborns.

“*Am Yisrael* withstood these tests because of their faith in Hashem and Moshe *Rabbeinu*. These two tests will also appear in the days preceding the advent of *Moshiach*. Just as the Jewish People were saved in Egypt because of the merit of their faith in the leaders of their generation, so, too, will their descendants be spared and redeemed because of the faith and trust they will place in the leaders of their generation.”

Klal Yisrael had these weapons of faith when they left Egypt. This constituted their armor that protected them from the enemy. It was upon this foundation of faith that they built their growing relationship with Hashem during the next forty years.