

# *Some Reasons for Anti-Semitism*

PARSHA INSIGHTS - VAYISHLACH (5760)

## *IN THE WRONG HANDS, PROPHECY AND TORAH CAN BE POISONOUS*

“These are the names of Aisav’s sons: Elifaz... Timna was a concubine of Elifaz, son of Aisav, and she bore Amalek to Elifaz” (36:10 and 12). We see that Aisav fathered Elifaz; Elifaz and Timna bore Amalek, Aisav’s grandson.

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin makes an observation. Gentile prophets, of whom we have seen more than one, are sure to end up persecuting *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel]. If they themselves do not, their offspring will inevitably do so. How is this proven?

Recall Bilam, the Aramite prophet. He attempted to curse the second generation of Jews in the wilderness as they resided near the border of *Eretz Yisroel* [the Land of Israel], in Moav’s region. We have discussed him before, including the fact that his level of prophecy was compared, in a certain sense, to that of Moshe *Rabainu* [Moses our teacher]. It is abundantly clear from Scripture that his enmity toward *Bnai Yisroel* was boundless.

Another fine illustration of this concept is in today’s *parsha* [Torah portion]. Who was Elifaz? We stated earlier that he was the son of Aisav. If we explore *Rashi* in the book of *Iyov* [Job] 4:1, we are astonished by his words. “Elifaz [Elifaz Hataimani - **one of Iyov’s comrades**] was Aisav’s son. Since he was nurtured in the lap of Yitzchak [*Avinu* - our forefather], he merited that Hashem’s Presence rest upon him.” Where in *Sefer Iyov* [the Book of Job] do we find that Elifaz had prophecy? In 4:12, he declares that “a word was conveyed secretly to me, and my ear grasped a bit of it.” *Rashi* points out that he refers to a *nevua* [prophetic word] he received regarding Iyov.

Who emanated from this Elifaz “the prophet?” None other than Amalek, the archenemy of the Jews. (Look at the very end of *Parshas Beshalach* and the very end of *Parshas Ki Saitzai* for a review of Amalek’s hostility. We also know that Haman came from Amalek.) Somehow, for some reason, the gentile prophet, Elifaz, fathered our main foe throughout the ages.

What about in later generations, when prophecy no longer exists? Rav Sorotzkin asserts that most non-Jews who have studied Torah (without pure motives) and have become experts in it have also become rabidly anti-Semitic. Many have even mastered the Oral Torah, even as far as “*Shas U’poskim*” [the Talmud with classic commentators and *halachic* (legal) works]. These are the oppressors who have caused us the most suffering. Shouldn’t it be the opposite?

Is there an underlying reason for this strange phenomenon? *Shmos Rabba* 30:12 aids us in comprehending. Akilas the convert told his uncle, King Andraynus, that an uncircumcised man is unable to truly learn Torah. This applies even to the wisest and most experienced people. It is based on *Tehillim* [Psalms] 147:19-20. Hashem “relates His word to Yaacov, His statutes and judgments to Israel. He did not do so for any other nation; such judgments - they do not know them...” Rav Sorotzkin explains that Torah is a formula for life and sustenance, a medicine for the body and soul. However, this is only true if it is in the right hands. It needs to be approached with *kedusha* [holiness] and *tahara* [purity]. For an *orel* [uncircumcised person] Torah is a “*sam moves*” [an absolute poison]. Prophecy and Torah, when ingested by an unrefined, unqualified man, become lethal. **These spiritual experiences are so powerful and potent, they create the effects of a strong medicine taken by the wrong person.** They can even increase anti-Semitic feelings.

This reminds us to sanctify ourselves as much as possible so that we can be worthy vessels for Torah and communication with Hashem.

*By Rabbi Moshe Heigh*

Text © 1999 Rabbi Moshe Heigh. Main title, formatting and definitions © 2011 Jewlight Inc. This Essay may only be printed unaltered in its entirety with copyrights displayed and given out free-of-charge. Linking allowed if your topic is relevant. Posting online is strictly prohibited.