



### ***Beshalach – Helping Hands***

*Dedicated by the Schreck family in commemoration of the yartzheit of Fraida bas Moshe Yosef z'l*

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“Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, ‘Pick men for us, and go out and fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.’ Joshua did as Moses had told him, to fight against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur ascended to the top of the hill. It came to pass that when Moses would raise his hand, Israel would prevail, and when he would lay down his hand, Amalek would prevail. Now Moses’ hands were heavy; so they took a stone and placed it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one from this [side], and one from that [side]; so he was with his hands in faith until sunset. Joshua weakened Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.” (Shemos 17:8-13)

It was the first of many battles. Amalek attacked us without cause or reason. We did not threaten their nation or land. We were simply a newly emancipated people on our way to embrace our newfound destiny. But they attacked the stragglers, the weak and elderly, and so we were forced to fight. Moshe tasked Yehoshua with organizing and leading the army into battle. Yehoshua mobilized the fighting force and Moshe ascended the mountain to pray on behalf of the people. Moshe raised his hands in supplicatory prayer, yet the Torah tells us, that his “hands were heavy.” Why the need for this piece of information? What is the Torah trying to teach us? Rashi comments, “Since he had been lax in [the performance of] the commandment [of warring against Amalek] and had appointed someone else in his stead, his hands became heavy.” Why did Moshe delegate this responsibility to Yehoshua instead of leading the army himself?

The commentaries share many insights, but I would like to share with you a novel interpretation by the Lubavitcher Rebbe of blessed memory. The Rebbe explains that Moshe’s initial inclination was in fact to lead the army himself. But he then felt that this could be contrary to the will of God. As we will learn a bit later in the Torah, God created age restrictions for army service. No man younger than 20 and older than 60 could serve in the standing army of the Jewish nation. Moshe Rabbeinu was 80 years old and decided to hand over this military responsibility to Yehoshua. The problem, explains the Rebbe, is that when you see a Jew in need, when you see your nation in crisis, one must put their personal *cheshbonos* (calculations and ideas) aside, roll up their sleeves and spring into action. Although Moshe’s logic was sound, God didn’t want logic, He wanted quick and decisive action on behalf of the nation. He didn’t want Moshe to delegate, He wanted Moshe to act. God conveys this message to Moshe through the heaviness of his hands. “You were heavy or slow to spring into action. You should not have outsourced this to Yehoshua, you should have led the charge yourself.”

The Rebbe’s profound insight can be amplified. The Torah is teaching us that there is a time to plan and there is a time to act. Too often in life we put all our energy into planning and thinking. We have the 6-month plan, the 2-year plan and the 3-decade plan. Our plans are polished, well thought out and fully detailed. There is only one problem: we keep the plans neatly filed on our desk, but we never execute; we fail to engage in dynamic activity. There comes a time to stop planning and thinking and start doing and acting. This does not mean that we shouldn’t plan and think ahead. We must be forward thinking people who are able to see beyond our current circumstances. However, we must be careful to avoid overthinking things to the point of inactivity. Thinking and planning is important – but so is doing.

Rav Kalonymos Kalman haLevi Epstein (1751-1823) in his sefer *Maor V’Shemesh* says, “What does it mean that Moshe’s hands were heavy? It means that Moshe’s strength weighed him down.” Moshe’s hands were filled with so much potential, strength and ability. He was carrying around so much power that his hands felt heavy. He didn’t think he could lead the army out, but he was wrong. He was weighed down with potential he didn’t even realize he had. This is the message for us. We must plan when possible. We must try to be “*ro’eh es ha’nolad*, to anticipate future results and repercussions.” We should not throw caution to the wind. But at the same time, we must understand that sometimes we must act even if we don’t have all the answers and information in hand. There are times when we must engage the battle of life, even if we think we are unprepared. We must remember that each of us possess hands which are heavy and weighed down with potential. May we find the strength to lift our hands, discover this potential and find success on the battlefield of life.