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ON TETZAVE - ZACHOR -
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Rav Soloveichik ZT'L Notes (Volume 1)

Notice These are unapproved unedited notes of classes given by Rav Soloveichik. We do not know who wrote the notes. However we offer this to the world that maybe someone can get some use out of these notes. A member of the family has looked at the notes and said that look like the real thing .(Rav Soloveichik did NOT write these notes) Purim Lecture by Rabbi Soloveichik on March 13, 1976

The megilah of Purim is not merely an act of reading but of understanding. It is symbolic of the future and might prevent future mistakes. Each word, each sentence of the megilah is in the proper place and nothing is superfluous. As we analyze the megilah, we come to the conclusion that nothing has basically changed during the period of 2500 years from the Purim occurrence until the modern era.

The text commences with the verse, "And it came to pass in the days of Achashueros." Indeed, it should be translated not as the "days" but the "years" because it reflects the image of the generation when the event occurred. These events do not occur by themselves; someone is behind it, and the Almighty is always behind the someone. It reflects the inner motivation of the individuals. G-d wills man to act out the historical drama, but leaves it in the hands of man whether it will be for constructive or destructive purposes. The megilah could have started by merely stating, "Achashueros ruled from Hodu to Cush" (India to Ethiopia) instead of the words "And it came to pass in the days of Achashueros." The meaning however is that those events were characteristic of Achashueros's era. It couldn't have taken place in a different era, only in the days of Achashueros. What kind of era was it? What was singular about its society? For the most part, it was a paradoxical, a tragic and a comical story. It was one which actually should not have taken place. There is a close resemblance between our time and his despite the two and a half millennia. In this lecture, I will delve into five characteristic traits or resemblances.

1) Portrayal of Kingdom. In the days of Achashueros, the territory he ruled over consisted of 127 provinces, almost the entire known world at that time. It was multi-racial, it was multi-lingual and far flung. In our time, certainly up to the second world war, the only thing comparable was the British Empire with colonies all over the world. There was no state religion and there were many political entities. Persia, the seat of government, had conquered many nations. It did not enslave or kill but invited them to join a federation of states. Each had its own parliament. How do we know this? The megilah speaks of amim (peoples) and princes. Another clue is that Achashueros's prime minister Memuchan (later known as Haman) recommended that the king send letters to all the provinces, the states etc. "according to their languages." All communiqués were in many languages.

Therefore, what is paradoxical? They did not like the Jews. After all, if there were so many groups, peoples cultures, religions, what difference should another group of people called the Jews have meant? If you speak of Germany for the Germans, France for the French (countries where anti-Semitism has been traditional) at least they have singular groups. But here it was cosmopolitan such as America or possibly England where it is homogeneous (therefore, less anti-Semitic). In Persia, with so many cultures, anti-Semitism should have been a foreign body. Persia was multi and should not have been anti-Semitic.

Neither Haman nor Hitler was the originator of anti-Semitism. Haman was not the inventor, he merely took advantage of it. Whereas, the people should have revolted at the idea; no one said a word! Why should the entire Jewish community have suffered? If Mordechai refused to bow, Haman could have killed Mordechai. For example in modern times, no one associates the common Chinese person in the streets as a communist or calls him a Mao, but because Trotsky was a Jew, they call the Jews communists. Common association is the tool of anti-Semites! Had he (Mordechai) been a Hitite, a Cananite (countries of the day), he would have been punished alone.

In fact, Haman didn't even recognize Mordechai's refusal to bow to him. (He was of too great self-importance to notice one individual.) How do we know? The megilah reads, "Higidu lo" (it was told to him). And why did they inform? It irritated them that Mordechai was a Jew and especially a person of worth, employed in the palace. They wanted a confrontation. Secondly, Haman at once declared the entire community guilty because of one individual.

Our personal era (America) is a multi-racial society. When one spoke of society in general up to the second world war, the average person referred in general to the "whole society"-American, English, French, German. Millions of blacks, Spanish, etc. would be eliminated (as if they were of some inferior breed). Now, how things are different! Can one imagine excluding India, China Africa? What is the symbol for this change? The United Nations. So we Jews should be part of society. Instead, 140 nations are organized against a nation the size of Rhode Island with a population of merely two and a half million, and all they do is pass resolutions. So, the same is true today as was then. Let us ask ourselves, "Who voted against Israel?" Nations from Africa who hardly saw a Jew, hardly met or knew Jews, their culture or anything about them. They would hardly recognize a Jew if they met one.

2) The Second Characteristic (Persia versus U.S.) In Persia there was an anti-aristocratic movement where the average citizen was the hero. He was the ordinary and mediocre man. (In America who is the all American boy? Is it the great student, the researcher, the scientist? No, the all American boy is the uncultured basketball or baseball player.) Then, the ordinary man was looked upon as the right man. Achashueros celebrated his rise to power in a common way. He himself was a usurper to the throne and he hated the cultured. He was sly, a Stalin, cunning, who wrangled his way to the top. Achashueros hated the nobility! Yet, why did he invite them separately to a party for no less than 180 days? He needed them because they controlled the army. The megilah terms it "Chale, Paras u'Madai" (the commanders of the forces). Those who control the army are the bosses. They were responsible for his security, and he needed them. But, Achashueros felt out of place in their company. Their fine manners irritated him because he was a plebeian. Then he invited his "crowd," the citizens, the uncouth of Shushan Habirah. How do we know that he enjoyed the common? Because the megilah tells us that on the seventh day "the heart of the king was merry from wine." During the 180 days before the cultured, he was not merry.

It would have been nicer for Queen Vashti to appear before the aristocracy, but instead, when did he summon her? Before the ordinary people! What does it mean that he told her to "appear before the people?" It means that in his intoxication he wanted to "shame and to humiliate her." Vashti came from royalty-was the daughter of Balshazar, the granddaughter of Nebuchadnezer. He wanted to degrade her before the common people.

Why did she refuse? She knew that he wanted to degrade her because otherwise, he would have come personally instead of sending servants as if she were a slave. It was as if sending a guard to degrade her. She returned a message, "My father drank wine in front of thousands and never got drunk. You got drunk on a little wine! You are a vulgar usurper! It was an exchange of derogatory messages, each wishing to destroy the other.

3) If suspicion gets out of hand it becomes a phobia, or it can become psychopathic. The suspicion which existed in Shushan was just that! This is exemplified by the difficulty in approaching Achashueros without his permission. The megilah tells us that when Mordechai asked Esther to approach the king, she reminded him that no one could come to the king unless he were summoned, and that if he did not extend his golden scepter, the person was immediately put to death. This decree extended to the queen herself. It was a security measure of course (because he feared his life, being a usurper), but the severity of the rule-that no one could pardon was definitely psychopathic.

However, more characteristic of the state of psychopathy was what followed when Vashti refused to come to the king. Memuchan declared that not so much didn't she comply with the wish of a king, but that she must start a revolution on the part of the wives against the husbands. For that he recommended Vashti's death. "She has done not only wrong to the king, but to all princes."

Can it be possible to command women to honor husbands? Neither Achashueros or all the world's leaders can do so! If the husband cannot command respect, no king can decree it! The climate was permeated with irrationality. It is typical of our society. West Germany invited athletes to its land for the Olympics and was technical responsible for their comfort and well-being. Yet, when twelve Israeli athletes were murdered and the murderers were captured, West Germany released them because they "feared the high-jacking or destruction of a Lufthansa airplane!" Thus, we have the same irrationality in our own time.

In another aspect, why does the megilah tell us this whole narrative about Memuchan and the letters sent to the provinces considering the wives etc.? It seems completely irrelevant to the main theme of the Purim megilah. However, there is a deep meaning. Rabbis say that had it not been for the first letters, all the Jews would have been killed. Had the people of all the provinces not received the first letters (which were perplexing to them) about wives giving respect to husbands, once they received the news to kill all the Jews on the month of Adar (11 months later) on the 13th day, they would have done so at once without waiting. After all, if given permission by the king, why wait for eleven months? But they feared to do so because due to the fact that suddenly they doubted the sanity of the king. "What is all this nonsense that he tells us to be rulers in our house? Since when haven't we been? What is it all about and what does he mean?" It was irrational to them! They feared to do anything when they got the second letters about killing Jews because if they did so, they might be punished for murder. Had it not been for the foolish letter, they might have killed at once. Thus, the salvation of the Jews was due to the idiotic letter.

4) Whatever promotes human comfort is correct. We have relationships in which we may often say, "I enjoy it," but we fail to ask ourselves, "Does it involve our fellow men? Does he enjoy it?" We often fail to take into account that what is good for me may not necessarily be good for others. Today there is, throughout the world, a sexual permissiveness which is so bad that it has almost reached that of the generation of the flood in Noah's time. In his time, whatever attracted the eye was permitted. Thus, we are told that if one saw a woman, he simply took her without question. If she refused, she was taken captive. In Achashueros's time, the people indulged in a hedonic society. The first chapter of the megilah is full of vulgarity. America today is still better than most of the world. In many countries, the permissiveness is extremely bad.

What happens to a hedonic society? In such a society, such as Germany, a tyrant is formed. China today is a very disciplined country, whereas the Communist counterpart in Russia is becoming more hedonic. If the two

clashed, the hedonic one would lose. The generation of the mabul (flood) was a hedonic one. The Dor Haflagah (the generation of the Tower of Babel) was disciplined (they all labored together very conscientiously). In a clash, the generation of Babel would have won. When the hedonic society of Germany awoke, it found a Hitler. When Achashueros's society awoke, it found Haman.

5) Hypocrisy. Russia says that Israel is "colonial minded." How about Russia? What of her colonial power? Russia says that Israel will enslave millions of Arabs. How about Russia and all the satellites she has annexed? India attacks Israel! How about the enslavement which Indira Gandhi has instituted?

There is something frightening about the megilah. The city of Shushan was a more Jewish city than New York is today. How do we know this? The megilah reads, "V'ha'ir Shushan n'vocha" (and the city of Shushan wept)-when the decree was learned and Mordechai came out in ashes. Later, when he was led through the city in robes, the whole city rejoiced. It was truly a Jewish city.

Twelve thousand invitations were sent out to Jews to attend Achashueros's party. In an instant Achashueros changed from friend to foe. The suddenness of change and the hypocrisy of the population is frightening, such as Germany. We find the same today. See how European countries changed in attitude towards Israel just due to oil.

How did G-d save? What did He want or expect the people to do? It was through the intervention of a lonely elderly Jew. "Ish Yehudi haya b'Shushan" (one person there in Shushan-a real Jew). He was an elderly frail man but to G-d he was indispensable. Also, a young naive girl. He was anonymous, neither invited to the party or wanted to be invited. He lived in solitude but he was the one whom G-d selected as Mashiach (the man of salvation). G-d could have saved without the plot of Mordechai and Esther. G-d wanted Mordechai as a partner, a collaborator. G-d always avails Himself of humans, in human affairs.

Why not G-d himself? It cannot be answered, but G-d does not act if man does not want. So it was in Egypt, so it was in Persia, and so it will be in the Messianic Era. Without Moshe there would have been no redemption. The same is true in the megilah. The story is interrupted to tell us, "Ish Yehudi" (a Jewish man). Without Mordechai there'd be no salvation. Mordechai does a little and the Almighty takes over!

From: TorahWeb.org [torahweb@torahweb.org] Sent: March 08, 2006 To: weeklydt@torahweb2.org Subject: Sins of the Soul - Rabbi Mordechai Willig <http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Sins of the Soul

I You shall make an altar on which to burn the incense (Shemos 30:1). The copper altar, upon which animals were offered, atones for the body's sins. Hence its height is three amos, the height of a human being (27:1).

The incense altar, by contrast, atones for the soul's sins. Animals, which are grossly physical, cannot atone for a spiritual entity. Therefore, incense, which produces ephemeral smoke and fragrance, is needed to purify the soul (Kli Yakar 30:1).

What are sins of the soul? The Kli Yakar maintains that the soul is sullied by the sins of the body. Alternatively, sins of the soul refer to imperfections in one's character. These shortcomings require atonement even if there are no technical violations committed by the body.

Just as one must repent from sinful actions, so must one repent from bad character traits. These include anger, hatred, jealousy, and the pursuit of money, glory and food. These sins are more severe than sinful deeds, for when one sinks into these bad traits it is difficult to separate from them. And so it says (Yeshaya 55:7), "let the wicked one forsake his way and the evil one his thoughts" (Rambam Hilchos Teshuva 7:3). The Rambam's proof text refers to the way and thoughts which require teshuva. Thoughts

are the aforementioned bad character traits, and the way is the lifestyle of one who possesses those traits, even if active sins are avoided.

It is for these sins of the soul that the incense altar atones. These flaws of character require smoke and fragrance, which have no hard physical substance, to achieve atonement.

II The incense altar is mentioned long after the description of all the other vessels of the mishkan (Chap. 25 - 27). The intervening chapters deal with the garments of the Kohanim (Chap. 28) and their initiation (Chap. 29). A person's garments represent his character traits. The Kohen's tunic is called mido (Vayikra 6:3), a term related to middos, character traits (Gra).

"You shall make garments of sanctity for Aharon your brother, for glory (kavod) and for splendor" (Shemos 28:2). Malbim explains that the word "kavod" in this context means the soul, as it often means in sefer Tehillim. Moshe Rabbeinu himself made "clothes" for the souls of Aharon and his children by enabling them to perfect and refine their character traits.

The sins atoned for by the garments include haughtiness and evil thoughts (Arachin 16a). Haughtiness leads to anger. Both must be avoided completely (Rambam Hilchos De'os 2:3). Hatred and jealousy are also products of arrogance, which prevents a person from loving another or being happy about another's successes. Evil thoughts include the pursuit of money, glory, and food. One ought not be mentally preoccupied with such pursuits. Rather, they should be viewed as a means to the greater end of serving Hashem (Rambam Hilchos De'os 3:1-3).

The garments of the kohanim symbolize the need to refine one's character. The term midda means measure. As a garment is fitted, or measured, so must each character trait be used in proper measure.

The initiation of the kohanim was performed by Moshe. "You shall take the anointment oil and pour it in his (Aharon's) head, and anoint him" (29:7). Although Moshe had served as the Kohein and wished to continue, he selflessly abdicated the position in favor of Aharon. He poured the oil on Aharon's beard as if it were his own (Shita Mekubetzes Krisus 5b - 25).

Moshe had no evil thoughts and no haughtiness when he initiated the kohanim. Moshe's humility, and his self-abnegation in the service of Klal Yisroel, is alluded to in the absence of his name from Parshas Tetzave (Ba'al HaTurim, 27:20). These very traits are reflected in the garments and initiation of the kohanim, which comprises the bulk of the parsha.

It is only after this character refinement that the Torah introduces the incense altar which is dedicated to atoning the sins of the soul. Alas, we no longer have the Beis Hamikdash and its vessels. But the requirement to improve our middos remains in full effect. Indeed, it is only by such an improvement that we can merit the restoration of the Beis Hamikdash.

From: kby-parsha-owner@kby.org on behalf of Kerem B'Yavneh Online [feedback@kby.org] Sent: March 09, 2006 2:11 AM To: KBY Parsha Subject: Parshat Zachor

Parshat Zachor "For the Hand is on the Throne of G-d"

Rosh Hayeshiva **Rav Mordechai Greenberg** shlita

On the pasuk, "Israel is My firstborn son" (Shemos 4:22), the Sforno writes as follows: Even though the future destiny is, "Then I will change the nations [to speak] a pure language, so that they all will proclaim the Name of Hashem" (Zephaniah 3:9), and they will all recognize the truth – even so, Israel will remain forever in their supreme level. Therefore, they are called "firstborn," because he is always on the highest level, even though other children are born after him.

We learn from this that there are two virtues to Israel. The first is to be a light for the nations and to teach them knowledge of G-d, so that: "Many nations will go and say, "Come, let us go up to the Mountain of Hashem and to the Temple of the G-d of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths.' For from Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim." (Micha 4:2)

It would seem possible that after all the nations recognize the power of G-d's reign, there will no longer be any advantage to Israel over the nations of the world. Therefore, G-d declared that Israel is His firstborn son. This is the second virtue, which stands by itself – that even after the perfection of the world, Israel has supremacy in that they reveal G-d's glory in the world. G-d is connected to them, as Chazal teach that G-d bound His name with Israel by joining His name in theirs, "Yisra-el."

As Rav Kook zt"l writes: "Kneset Yisrael clothes the Divinity that is revealed in the world." These two roles are included in the pasuk: "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Shemos 19:6) A "holy nation" refers to the inherent virtue, whereas "a kingdom of priests" refers to Israel's role amongst the nations as a priest in the nation, "Torah they will seek from his mouth." (Malachi 2:8)

Most of the nations hate Israel primarily because of its priestly aspect. They do not want to learn a way of life from Israel. Amalek, a descendent of Esav, is different. They hate Israel also because of their inherent quality: "Was not Esav the brother of Yaakov – the word of Hashem – yet I loved Yaakov." (Malachi 1:2) In Esav's mind, Yaakov doubly harmed him: "He took away my birthright, and now, he took away my blessing." (Bereishit 27:36) The birthright reflects the inherent virtue of Yaakov, whereas the blessing reflects the external aspect that is evident also to the other nations. About the latter it says, "When you are aggrieved, you may cast off his yoke from upon your neck." (27:40) However, Esav objects to Yaakov also on account of his taking of the birthright, the inner virtue, which will never change.

"G-d exiled Israel amongst the nations only so that converts would be added to them." (Pesachim 87b) However, regarding Amalek, it says that G-d swore that He will not accept converts from them, because the other nations object only to Israel's ways, and this can be corrected, whereas Amalek objects to the inner, inherent aspect of Israel. Therefore, we are commanded to obliterate their name completely.

This is what it says, "For the hand is on the Throne of G-d; Hashem maintains a war against Amalek, from generation to generation." (Shemos 17:16) Rashi explains: "G-d's Name is not complete, and Throne is not complete until Amalek's name will be obliterated." G-d's Name is something unseen, but is called on Israel, as we say: "Your great and holy Name you called upon us." (Prayer of the High Holidays and Three festivals) The Name reflects the inherent purpose of Israel. The royal Throne, on the other hand, is what Israel reveal in the world, as a kingdom of priests, and both are incomplete so long as Amalek exists.

This was Haman's intention when he said: "There is one people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of your realm. Their laws are different from every other people's." (Esther 3:8) They are a single and special nation, who has inherent worth, and also they are dispersed among the nations to teach their Torah in public. This will not change in the future, because their laws are always different.

Therefore, the war against Amalek is so difficult, because it includes both the inherent and external quality of Israel. It required Yehoshua's battle, Moshe's prayer and G-d's oath: "I shall surely erase (macheh) the memory of Amalek from under the heavens." (Shemos 17:14) The double language, "macheh," reflects two erasures – corresponding to the inherent and the external war.

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EMES LIYAAKOV

Weekly Insights from MOREINU

HORAV YAAKOV KAMENETZKY zt"l

[Translated by Ephraim Weiss <Easykgh@aol.com>]

The Midrash relates that at the time of matan Torah, Hashem uprooted Har Sinai, and suspended it on top of Bnei Yisroel. Hashem warned Bnei Yisroel that if they would not accept the Torah, that spot would become their grave. Several of the miforshim are bothered by this Midrash. Bnei Yisroel accepted the Torah willingly, when they declared "na'aseh v'nishmah." Why then was it necessary for Hashem to threaten Bnei Yisroel? Chazal explain that in saying "na'aseh v'nishmah," Bnei Yisroel only accepted Torah SheBichsav, while the threat of Har Sinai hanging over their heads was to ensure that Bnei Yisroel accepted Torah SheBaal Peh. However, after the miracle of Purim, Bnei Yisroel once again accepted Torah She- Baal Peh, this time willingly, and not under any duress.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt'l further clarifies this explanation. What was it about the nes of Purim that spurred Bnei Yisroel to accept Torah She- Baal Peh? When Bnei Yisroel stood at Har Sinai, it was after witnessing the ten makkos and krias Yam Suf. What was so special about the nes of Purim, that it accomplished even what the nissim of yetzias Mitzrayim could not accomplish, in encouraging Bnei Yisroel to accept Torah SheBaal Peh?

Rav Yaakov explains this concept by analyzing the difference between Torah SheBichsav and Torah SheBaal Peh. Torah SheBichsav is the Torah of Shomayim, in that we received it in its completed form at Har Sinai. However, Torah SheBaal Peh is the Torah of the Earth. While an essential component of our emunah is the belief that Torah SheBaal Peh was also given at Har Sinai, it is up to us, in this world, to understand it, and to expound upon it by use of the 13 Midos with which the Torah is darshened. While much of Torah SheBaal Peh is beyond the grasp of human comprehension, it is nevertheless the foundation on which we, in this world, can build on.

The nissim of yetzias Mitzrayim were supernatural events, beyond human understanding. Bnei Yisroel recognized that there is Hashem in Shomayim, who controls all aspects of the world, and works in ways that are beyond our comprehension. As such, they understood their obligation to accept Torah SheBichsav, the Torah which is completely daas Elyon, and is beyond the work of mere humans. However, they could not fathom the concept of a Torah which came from Shomayim, and was nevertheless subject to human explanation and elucidation. As such, Hashem ensured that they would accept it by threatening them with death. All this changed after the nes of Purim. The nes of Purim was not an open miracle for all to see, but rather could be viewed as a series of random, unrelated political events; a crazed monarch kills his wife, a new queen is appointed, a man finds favor with the king by foiling an assassination plot against him, and a few years later, they are well placed to protect Klal Yisroel from the wicked decree of Haman. At face value, there is nothing miraculous taking place. However, we know better, that all these events were orchestrated by Hashem from the very beginning, veiled behind the guise of the natural. It is up to us to find the hand of Hashem behind everyday events. Bnei Yisroel now understood that it is shayach for there to be a Torah which, while given by Hashem, is given to us to learn, and to understand by ourselves. As such, they immediately got up, and "kimu v'kiblu" they once again accepted Torah SheBaal Peh willingly.

May we be zocheh to search for, and find, the Yad Hashem behind everything that occurs in the world, so that we may renew our commitment to Torah on a daily basis, and ultimately merit the day on which everything will be understood; the coming of Moshiach, b'mihayra b'yameinu, amen.

From: Rav Kook List [ravkooklist@gmail.com] Sent: March 08, 2006

Rav Kook on Purim:

Purim: "Go, Gather All the Jews"

During these days of Purim, in these difficult hours, many adversities from without besiege and afflict the entire nation of Israel.

Yet the greatest anguish stems from our internal conflicts, because internal tranquility, the peaces of the House of Israel, is lacking. Let us then recall those days

and their events as they are recorded in the Scroll of Esther, written, as it was, with divine inspiration. For the divine spirit transcends all passages of time and the changing ideologies of each generation. The eternal words "Go, gather all the Jews" must once again revitalize us and elevates us from our degradation.

Is Unity Possible?

But one may certainly ask: Is it really possible today to gather all of the Jews? How can one unite all the different factions and parties? How will the bones scattered across the wide valley of exile - both material and spiritual - once again form that entity known as "Klal Yisrael" and put forth a demand for its strength, its renewal, and a return from its captivity?

The answer is that there is one location where this dispersion, both physical and spiritual, cannot govern us. But you should object: We see with our own eyes the awful internal strife, Jews fighting Jews, brothers turning against brothers like wolves and snakes. How then can one say, "Go, gather the Jews"?

Whoever thinks that Haman was lying when he said, "There is one nation scattered and divided" [Esther 3:8], is mistaken. Indeed, this one nation is scattered and divided, but nevertheless, it is one nation. Nor should one question the possibility of a nation being simultaneously united and divided. There are wonders in the world. This nation, whose entire existence in the world rests upon wondrous wonders, demonstrates by its very existence that it is essentially one nation, despite its being scattered and divided.

True, the malady of exile has scattered and divided us. But the Eternal One of Israel does not lie. The exile and all of its terrors must come to an end. Now that the wind has begun to blow from the four corners of the earth, from both the troubles surrounding us and from the spiritual revelation which stirs us to return and be rebuilt in the land of our life - now we are nearing the realization that there is a cure for the malady of our dispersion and division. In the final analysis, we are, and shall be, one nation, and Israel shall once again rise to the eternal words, "Go, gather all the Jews."

The Hidden Collective Soul

But the difficult question obstructing the path of redemption remains: dispersion and division are consuming us. The answer is that a person has two aspects. Medical treatment of the individual draws from the inner springs of vitality and health dormant within a person's soul. That soul is so hidden that the patient himself is unaware of its essence. Spiritual maladies and their physical manifestations infect only the baser part of man, that familiar side of which he is aware. But his hidden, unknown side always bursts with energy, brimming with life and strength. This hidden repository of health has the power to affect the outer self, which misleads one into thinking that he is sick and feeble when he in fact possesses an energetic, healthy soul full of life and vigor.

That which is true for the individual applies to a much greater degree to the entire collective. "Klal Yisrael" in particular is truly one nation: "And who is like Your nation, Israel, one nation in the land?" [I Sam. 15:19] We must therefore admit our error in identifying the essence of Israel with its surface appearance, its outer, baser side. For this self-image has made us fearful. We are conscious only of our dispersion and division.

The Hamans of every generation, who strike at us with their poisonous hatred, particularly in this transition period, perceive our weak side, for it is visible and recognizable. But precisely through these tribulations we shall come to sense that we possess a previously unknown, collective soul, a great national spirit whose existence we have forgotten. It abounds with vitality and possesses sufficient power to renew our lives as of old and to withstand all of the Amalekites who wish to smite our feeble.

This hidden Judaism, unknown even to ourselves, this great soul of a great nation, which bears both the suffering and the light of the world within it, will become known to us during these portentous times. The blessing of "Go, gather the Jews" will emerge from its unknown place in the national soul. Every Purim we must appreciate the great, hidden repository of our blessedness and wealth and the virtue of our oneness, which shall vanquish our scattered and divided side. From a condition of 'until he cannot distinguish between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai' comes the supernal inclination to find the unknown Jew within us. Brothers shall know one another and join hands, and a mighty voice will be heard: "Let us rise up and ascend to Zion, to the house of our Lord!" [Jer. 31:5]

[from "Celebration of the Soul," translated by R. Pesach Jaffe, pp. 126-129]

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From: Jeffrey Gross [jgross@torah.org] Sent: March 09, 2006 To: weekly-halacha@torah.org Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Tetzaveh
WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5766

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics.

For final rulings, consult your Rav

SHE'AILOS U'TESHUVOS

QUESTION: If one missed one or several words from the Torah reading of Parashas Zachor, must he hear the Torah reading again?

DISCUSSION: L'chatchilah, one should pay full attention so that he does not miss even a single word of the reading.(4) But as long as one heard the basic message of the Torah portion - to remember Amalek's dastardly deed and to eradicate their memory - one has fulfilled his obligation even though he did not hear every single word of the reading.(5)

Similarly, some poskim(6) consider the birchos ha-Torah recited over Parashas Zachor an integral part of the mitzvah. This means that the oleh who recites these blessings must recite them slowly, loudly and with kavanah to be motzi the congregation with the berachos. The congregation, too, must hear every word with kavanah to be yotzei with the berachos. But since most poskim do not mention this stringency, if one did not hear part of the berachah, or even if he missed the berachos altogether, he has fulfilled his obligation.(7)

QUESTION: Who should recite the berachos when a man, who has already read or heard the Megillah in shul, reads the Megillah for a group of ladies?

DISCUSSION: The preferred method depends on several factors:

* If there are fewer than ten ladies present, then each lady should recite the berachos herself.(8)

* If there are ten or more ladies, there are two options: Either one lady recites the berachos and is motzi the rest of the group.(9) or each lady recites her own berachos.(10) Either way is l'chatchilah.(11)

* If the ladies do not know how to recite the berachos, then the man reading the Megillah recites the berachos for them.(12)

QUESTION: If there is no man available to read the Megillah for a lady who was unable to go to shul, may another lady read the Megillah for her?

DISCUSSION: A lady may read the Megillah for another lady but only if she herself has not yet fulfilled her obligation of hearing the Megillah. If she has already fulfilled her own obligation, she may not read it again in order to be motzi another lady.(13) ...

FOOTNOTES: 4 Mikroei Kodosh, Purim, 7. See Mekadesh Yisrael 13. 5 Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling, quoted in Moadei Yeshurun, pg. 47 and in l'Torah v'Horoah vol. 8, pg. 16); Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo, 2:18-2). 6 See Taz O.C. 685:2 and Chasam Sofer (notes on Pri Chadash 685:7). 7 Harav M. Feinstein (oral ruling, quoted in Moadei Yeshurun, pg. 47). See similar ruling in Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 3, pg. 32, quoting Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky. 8 Based on Mishnah Berurah 689:15 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 692:13. See Minchas Yitzchak 3:53-14. 9 Recommended by Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Halichos Shelomo 2:19-3).

10 Recommended by Minchas Yitzchak 3:54-38; 8:63. 11 Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Balaylah Hahuh, pg. 8) 12 Mishnah Berurah 692:10. 13 Beir Halachah 689:1 s.v. venoshim.

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REMEMBERING

One of the basic requirements of Judaism is the gift of memory. The word zachor is key to many of the basic mitzvot and values of Judaism. It is the basis of our holy day of Shabat where the commandment in the Ten Commandments begins with the word zachor - "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The great days of awe and judgment that constitute Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year days, are called in our prayers yom hazikaron, the day of remembrance. The mitzva of tzitzit is dedicated to remembering all of the commandments of the Torah. And this Shabat is parshat zachor when we pledge ourselves not to forget the evil that continually lurks in our world and its inherent danger to human civilized survival.

Thus we see from these few examples, and there are many more present in the Torah and Jewish life, that memory is the most essential trait for Jewish continuity and success. A people that has no memory has a most difficult and uncertain future as well. We are all witness to the human tragedy that takes place within a family when, G-d forbid, someone in the family loses one's sense of memory. There is nothing as crushing as seeing a vibrant and productive human being disappear before one's very eyes because of the loss of memory. Well, on a national scale the same tragedy is currently true as well. It is hard to recognize Amalek and remember how to deal with that threat when a nation no longer remembers its own self and past.

A great portion of the Jewish world suffers from amnesia, a loss of memory, a form of mental and spiritual dementia. Most of the time, this is a product of self-inflicted forgetfulness. The secular Zionist movement attempted to erase centuries of Jewish memory in its haste to create the "new Jew" and by so succeeding created generations of Jews with no memory and an alienation towards Judaism and its traditions. By ignoring Jewish education and completely assimilating into Western culture, mores and values, the vast majority of Jews in the Diaspora lost any connection with their past and are slowly disappearing from the Jewish scene. The Jewish Left, with its secular messianism and ruthless self-righteousness, purposely destroyed any remnants of its Jewish past in its pursuit of international utopianism. Substituting Marx for Moses and Lenin for Ezra, the Left completely destroyed any hope of Jewish memory for its children and generations.

When Marx and Lenin collapsed in ignominy, the Jewish Left was left (excuse the pun) empty and without any Jewish moorings. By now, most of the Jewish Left has forgotten Marx and Lenin as well and remains completely empty of any memories. It is therefore of little wonder that so many Jews cannot find their way out of the mental maze that afflicts them. They cannot remember how they entered the maze and thus cannot begin to find their way out of that self same maze.

In a general sense, all of the mitzvot of the Torah are to be seen as memory aids. For memory depends upon tangible experiences, life events and not theoretical ideas or even intellectual accomplishments. The smells of the Jewish kitchen on Friday are what cause the memory of Shabat to be real and unforgettable within us. Sitting in a succah, hearing the sound of the shofar, eating matzo at the Pesach seder are all the stuff that memory is fashioned from. The much-ballyhooded "emptiness" of the secular Jewish wagon is not because of a lack of intellect or thoughts or even values. It is a product of the lack of tangible experiences that can make that intellect and ideas memorable, capable of being passed on from one generation to the next. Memory always needs positive reinforcement to be preserved and treasured.

Only experiences, events, and happenings can provide such a positive reinforcement. We would even forget Amalek - notice how the Holocaust has disappeared from the minds and hearts of so many Jews - if it were not for the fact that every year parshat zachor, with its special Torah reading and synagogue experience, arrives and reinforces our memory. The Torah commands us not to forget Amalek. But it is not only Amalek that is not to be forgotten. It is all of Jewish history, the past story of our families and ancestors, the message of Sinai that is also not to be forgotten. It is memory that guarantees our productive present and future.

Weekly Parsha March 10, 2006

TETZAVEH

Rabbi Berel Wein

The Torah dwells on the necessity for taking the finest olive oil to use as the fuel for the great candelabra that stood in the Mishkan and later in the Temple in Jerusalem. Olive oil was one of the great staples of the ancient world. It provided fuel, skin lotion, food and use as a lubricant in all sorts of mechanical devices. If there was an

item of necessary multi-purpose use in the homes of our biblical ancestors it was olive oil. The Torah however specifies that the olive oil that was to be used as the fuel for the candelabra was to be pure, the first crush of the olives, beaten fine for the lamp. In this we have the general lesson of the Torah that out of all of the multiple talents and uses that a human being possesses, the first and best of these is to be employed in the service of G-d and His commandments. G-d is never to be offered what is second best, inferior, a purely default position and contribution.

Olive oil, with its many essential uses and importance is the symbol of this idea of using the many gifts granted to us by the Creator for His purposes and the betterment of human society. If one is willing and able to offer the best that one has for the advancement of noble and holy causes then that cause is immeasurably strengthened and advanced. The candelabra is the symbol of our lives and achievements. The fuel that we use to light that candelabra must always be of the finest quality obtainable within our talents and means.

I think therefore that this is the reason why that olive oil is the preferred fuel for the performance of other mitzvot as well. In the Mishna there is opinion, though it is not binding according to halacha, that only olive oil should be used to light the Shabat lights on Friday nights. There are many Jewish women today who only use olive oil for their Shabat flames. The miracle of Chanuka was based on the small cruise of olive oil and therefore the preferred method of performing the Chanuka mitzvah is by using olive oil, though again other forms of flames are also acceptable. The latkes and sufganiyot of Chanuka are all fried or baked in olive oil. These are again examples of using the best for God's purposes. It is called in rabbinic terminology mitzvah min hamuvchar - doing the mitzvah in the finest and best way possible.

And that is why the Torah places so much emphasis on how the olive oil for the great candelabra is to be prepared and refined. By using the finest that we possess we can hope to achieve an eternal flame within our souls and within all of Israel as well. For the purpose of the great candelabra was not to provide light for God, so to speak, for He requires no light from us. The purpose was to light the eternal flame within the Jewish people. That goal and purpose must remain high on our agenda today as well. Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

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From: usa-weekly@yatednews.com Yated USA Sent: March 09, 2006 2:15 PM

Subject: YATED USA WEEKLY 03-10-06

**Purim: A Harbinger of a Future Victory
by Yonason Rosenblum**

By virtue of our Redemption from Mitzrayim, the Jewish people became avodim to Hashem. That servitude consists of two parts. We belong to Hashem because He saved us from captivity. And as a consequence of His ownership, we are obligated to do His will. Throughout Jewish history, two distinct groups of enemies have attempted to interfere with one or another of these aspects of our relationship with Hashem. In Sefer Daniel, we read the nevuah concerning four different kingdoms that will enslave the Jewish people. Those four kingdoms - Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome or Edom - contested Hashem's claim of ownership by asserting their own claims.

A second group, the seven Canaanite nations, sought to prevent the Jewish people from entering into the Eretz Yisroel and performing the mitzvos.

Each of these groups has its progenitor. Mitzrayim is the first of Kingdoms: "Mitzrayim is the first of My strength in the tents of Cham" (Tehillim 78: 51). Mitzrayim enslaved the Jewish people even prior to their acquisition by Hashem. Had we not been redeemed from Mitzrayim, we would never have been acquired by Hashem in the first place.

And "Amalek is first among the nations" (Bamidbar 24:20). Amalek attacked us as even before the Maamad Har Sinai, and therefore sought to prevent Hashem from conveying His will. The Seven Nations sought to prevent our fulfillment of that Will after the Maamad Har Sinai.

Rav Yitzchok Hutner zt"l offers a striking insight on the relationship of the Four Kingdoms and the Seven Nations with regard to Purim (see Pachad Yitzchak on Purim, Maamar 2, upon which this piece is based.) In general, the Four Kingdoms and the Seven Nations operate independently of one another. The unique aspect of the Purim story is the conjunction of those two groups. Achashveirosh, a usurper, sits on the throne of Persia, the second of the Four Kingdoms enumerated in Daniel. His chief advisor, and the one behind the fiendish plan to "to destroy, kill, and obliterate" every Jew, is Haman, a direct descendant of Amalek.

Chazal noted the double threat posed by this conjunction of enemies. The Gemara asks, "Where do we find Esther hinted to in the Written Torah," and answers by citing the verse, "Anochi haster astir - I will surely hide My face" (Devorim 31:18). The double reference to Hashem's hiddenness in connection with Esther's story refers to the double threat posed by Haman/Amalek's ability to join the opposition of the Four Kingdoms with that of the Seven Nations.

That intensified threat was to become the model for all modern Jewish history from the time the Romans destroyed the Bais Hamikdash in Yerushalayim. Indeed, the threat has become internationalized in our fourth and final golus, the golus of Rome or Edom. The Ramban writes that each of the Four Kingdoms is foreshadowed by one of the four kings against whom Avrohom went to war. The fourth of those kings is "Tidal, the king of nations." Tidal, alone of the four kings, did not rule over a single kingdom, but many. And this, says the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah, 42:7), parallels the golus of Edom, which spreads incitement against the Jews to all the nations of the world.

Our fourth and final golus is, in the language of Chazal, described interchangeably as the golus of Rome or Edom. Edom refers to Esav, who dwelt there and was the ancestor of Amalek. In other words, our present golus partakes equally of the challenge of the Four Kingdoms and of Amalek, just as in the days of Achashveirosh and Haman.

And indeed both those elements are readily discerned today. The delegitimization of Israel, and the rejection of Jewish sovereignty, derives from the opposition of the Four Kingdoms. As Mark Lilla of the University of Chicago puts it, Jews are mocked today for their insistence on their national identity and entitlement to sovereignty, including the most important right of a sovereign people - the right to defend itself. That right is denied Israel by the International Court of Justice, which declared Israel's security fence a violation of international law; it is denied by the U.N., which consistently applies a different standard to Israeli responses to terror attacks than are applied to any other nation; and it is denied by divestment campaigns, which single out Israel as a uniquely evil state.

Jewish sovereignty is the pre-condition for our becoming fully Hashem's servants. That is why the efforts of the Four Kingdoms to substitute their claims upon us always began with exile from the Land.

The insidious efforts of Amalek to prevent us from following Hashem's will are equally evident in today's world. Amalek is the ultimate scoffer, denying any meaning or purpose to life. The verse "Do not reprove the scoffer" (Mishlei 9:8), Chazal teach us, refers to Amalek. Because he cannot take anything seriously, he has no possibility of change or growth, and thus there is no point in reproving him. Amalek's end can only be destruction.

Never was our connection to Hashem so clear as during the exodus from Mitzrayim. The nations all trembled in awe of the Jewish people, and none came forward to do battle. Except for Amalek. Amalek thrust the Jewish

people back into the realm of history, removed from any transcendental context.

Prior to Amalek's attack, no nation even conceived the possibility of waging war against us - the miracles in Mitzrayim made Hashem's protection too clear. Even though Amalek was routed, his attack removed the awe. Now other nations could attribute his defeat to a strategic error of some kind, and devise their own superior strategies. That is what Chazal mean when they compare Amalek to one who leaps into a scalding bath and cools it off for all those who follow. Amalek cooled off awareness of Hashem, awareness of a world of meaning and purpose.

The Torah describes how Amalek's ancestor Esav despised the birthright: "And he ate and drank and got up and went and despised the birthright" (Bereishis 25:34). The Torah's description of Esav in a series of short, action verbs captures his animal-like, unreflective nature. Celebrations of such instinctual, hedonistic behavior abound today.

At our first encounter with Amalek, the latter cut off the sign of the covenant between Hashem and Avrohom and cast it towards Heaven, as if to deny the existence of a transcendent G-d, and thus any reason to perform the mitzvot. And we live in a world filled with such denial today.

The battle with Amalek is always described in the Torah as taking place "tomorrow." Moshe tells Yehoshua, "Go and battle with Amalek, tomorrow . . ." (Shemos 17:9). David Hamelech is described as having "defeated Amalek on the morrow" (Shmuel I 30:17). And Esther requests from Achashverosh a second day to kill the Amalekites in Shushan.

Purim is harbinger of the future victory over Amalek and the poison that he spread among the nations. That is why on Purim alone we permit ourselves the full rejoicing normally reserved for the days of Moshiach: "Then our mouths be filled with laughter" (Tehillim 126:2). In reality, Purim belongs to a future time, to the morrow, the time of our final reckoning with Amalek and our victory over both the Four Kingdoms and the Seven Nations.

From: innernet-owner@innernet.org.il on behalf of Heritage House [innernet@gmail.com] Sent: March 07, 2006 5:00 AM To: innernet@innernet.org.il Subject: InnerNet - "Understanding the Purim Characters" INNERNET MAGAZINE <http://innernet.org.il> March 2006

* * *

"UNDERSTANDING THE PURIM CHARACTERS"

by the Dubner Maggid

* * *

"In the third year of his reign, [Achashverosh] made a feast for all his officers and servants, with the legions of Persia and Media, and the nobles and officials of the provinces in attendance. He showed off the glorious riches of his kingdom and the opulent splendor of his majesty for many days -- 180 days." (Scroll of Ester 1:3-4)

To shed light on this passage, we note that are there two distinct types of hospitality. The first type is where the host sincerely wishes to benefit his guest, by providing nourishing food to the hungry, serving refreshing drink to the thirsty, or honoring the venerable. The second type, an ignoble one, is where the host does not have the welfare of his guests in mind at all, but has invited them merely for his own aggrandizement. Here the host's goal is to get his guests to praise him in public for his outstanding hospitality and his great wealth -- his gold and silver vessels, and his extraordinary treasures. A person angling for praises will invite all passersby into his house, serve them copious food and drink, and show off to them all his treasure stores, in order to dazzle them.

We can tell which purpose a person has in mind by seeing how he reacts when some untoward event occurs during an affair he is hosting. Suppose, for example, that some gold or silver item is misplaced or damaged during the affair. Although all people are taken aback when they suffer a loss, different hosts will react differently to such a loss. If the host's sole intent is to benefit and honor his guests, then he will avoid showing dismay over the

loss, in order not to upset or embarrass his guests. He will say to himself: "I will not demoralize my guests over this. I will just chalk up the loss as part of the cost of the banquet and let my guests dine in peace. The One Who commanded us to take in wayfarers and give honor to worthy men will eventually restore my loss."

It is the exact opposite with a host whose sole intent is to aggrandize himself -- to achieve widespread fame -- and who does not care about the welfare or honor of his guests at all. Were it not for his desire to show himself off, he would close his door so that no wayfarer should come within his view, and would show no favor or honor to visitors whatsoever. To a person who is merely seeking to be glorified, possessions are extremely important.

Therefore, if one of his possessions is misplaced or damaged during an affair he is hosting, he cannot hold himself back even for a second. He is overcome with agitation over any mishap to the precious possessions that bring him honor. Since his sole motive in hosting the affair is to show himself off, the mishap completely ruins the affair for him, since the loss injures his pride. Hence he loses his composure entirely, with no concern for his guests. It is likewise when any other untoward event occurs that causes some slight injury to his pride.

Accordingly, the Megillah makes a point here of describing the motivation behind Achashverosh's banquet, so that we can understand his behavior later on. In this banquet, Achashverosh displayed fabulously indiscriminate generosity. But his whole purpose was merely to bring himself glory and honor. He was not interested at all in the welfare and honor of his guests. As the Megillah states, "He made a feast for all his officers and servants, with the legions of Persia and Media, and the nobles and officials of the provinces in attendance." But the sole purpose of this feast was to show off "the glorious riches of his kingdom and the opulent splendor of his majesty." He was not trying to benefit or honor his guests at all.

This is reflected in how Achashverosh reacted when he suffered a slight blow to his pride, by his wife Vashti's refusal to comply with his order to appear before him. Achashverosh turned everything upside down. He could not muster the willpower to hold back until after the feast was over, and then bring her to justice. The Megillah indicates that the episode with Vashti occurred during the feast itself: Vashti was summoned when "the king's heart was merry with wine." Yet after this episode we do not find in the Megillah any further discussion of the feast. Apparently the whole feast came to an end, and everyone fled home in face of the king's wrath.

Thus a small mishap ruined the entire great feast. The reason is that, as we explained above, it was merely for his ego's sake that Achashverosh made this feast in the first place. The wrath he displayed at Vashti's disobedience was in proportion to the egoism that had motivated him. Because everything he did was for the sake of showing off his glory, when his pride was slighted he put everything to an end.

* * *

Magnificence All Her Own

[Contrast this to Esther, who radiated a deep beauty and charm.] An analogy brings out the point. A man and his son go to a tavern where food is served. The waiter sets before them a portion of meat flavored with various spices, but the father refrains from eating it. The son is baffled. He asks: "Father, why aren't you eating this meat? It has such a nice aroma from all the spices." The father answers: "My son, this meat is spoiled. The way it is all dressed up with spices proves it. If the meat were fresh, it would not need any spices." Something that is good in its own right does not need to be dressed up to arouse appreciation.

Esther is a case in point: she was viewed with favor in her own right, without any external aids. The Megillah (Esther 2:15) relates that when Esther's turn came to be taken before the king, she did not ask for any of the adornments that the other young women had asked for. Nonetheless, Esther was viewed with favor by all who saw her. The other women prettied themselves up with all sorts of adornments and cosmetics. In addition, when they went into the king's chamber, they came with royal musicians

who played long, moving serenades to enhance the king's appreciation of their beauty.

Whatever beauty the king saw in them could easily have been due to these external trappings; it could not be said that they themselves were viewed with favor. But Esther did not ask for any of these things. Hence, when the Megillah states that Esther was viewed with favor by all who saw her, this means Esther herself- without external trappings.

In this vein, King Solomon declares (Proverbs 31:30): "Grace is false, and beauty is vain." A woman whose beauty is merely physical must don silver and gold ornaments for enhancement. Thus, her grace and beauty are due largely to the ornaments. But, King Solomon continues, "a God-fearing woman -- she shall be praised." That is, she herself will be praised -- without any need to beautify herself with ornaments or other aids.

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From: Halacha [halacha@yutorah.org] Sent: March 07, 2006 9:19 AM To:

YUTorah Halacha Overview-

**The Mitzvah of Remembering the Battle of Amalek
BY RABBI JOSH FLUG**

The Torah (Devarim 25:17) commands us to remember the incident of Amalek attacking the Jewish people as they left the land of Egypt (mitzvat zechirat Amalek).

This is considered a positive commandment according to most Rishonim (see R. Yerucham F. Perlow's commentary on R. Sa'adiah Gaon's Sefer HaMitzvot, Vol. III, Parsha 61). The mitzvah of zechirat Amalek is traditionally fulfilled with the reading of Parshat Zachor (Devarim 25:17-19) on the Shabbat prior to Purim. This article will explore the nature of this mitzvah and how it is fulfilled.

The Frequency of the Obligation

Sefer HaChinuch, no. 603, notes that there is no indication in the Torah or Talmudic sources as to how often one must perform mitzvat zechirat Amalek. He suggests that the range is between one and three years. Other Rishonim (see Semak no. 147) posit that the mitzvah must be performed every year. R. Moshe Sofer, Chatam Sofer, Even HaEzer no. 119, suggests that the reason for the annual requirement is based on a comment of the Gemara, Berachot 58b, that certain events are forgotten after twelve months. The frequency of mitzvat zechirat Amalek is based on a requirement to prevent forgetting the battle of Amalek. Therefore, one must remember the battle of Amalek every twelve months. Chatam Sofer adds that even though in a leap year there is a thirteen month lapse between readings of Parshat Zachor, there is no need to institute an additional reading of Parshat Zachor in a leap year. The reason why twelve months is significant in the context of memory is because over the course of twelve months, a person experiences the entire range of events in the annual cycle. These events cause him to forget experiences from the previous year. In a leap year, it actually takes thirteen months to create this phenomenon.

Does the Mitzvah Have to be Performed in the Context of Keriat HaTorah?

The Gemara, Megillah 18a, states that mitzvat zechirat Amalek must be performed verbally. It is not sufficient to remind oneself mentally of this battle. This ruling comes in the context of a discussion in the Gemara regarding the source that Megillat Esther must be read from a megillah rather than recited by heart. The Gemara, based on a gezeirah shavah (a method of biblical interpretation) equates the mitzvah of reading the megillah to the mitzvah of zechirat Amalek. Just as Moshe was commanded to memorialize the battle of Amalek in text format (Shemot 17:14), so

too the megillah must be read from a text. The implication of the Gemara is that mitzvat zechirat Amalek must certainly be performed by reading from a text. This Gemara is the basis for the opinion of some Rishonim (see for example, Tosafot, Megillah 17b s.v. Kol) that the reading of Parshat Zachor from a sefer Torah is biblically mandated.

R. Yoav Y. Weingarten, Teshuvot Chelkat Yoav, Orach Chaim no. 36, notes that this Gemara does not necessarily prove that mitzvat zechirat Amalek must be performed by reading from a sefer Torah. The source that Megillat Esther must be read from a megillah is not from the mitzvah of zechirat Amalek, but rather from the commandment that Moshe received that he must record the battle in a text. Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 5:5, in recording mitzvat zechirat Amalek, lists no requirement for a sefer Torah. R. Ovadia Yosef, Yabia Omer, Orach Chaim 8:54:17, notes that Chelkat Yoav's interpretation supports Rambam's opinion.

The requirement to fulfill mitzvat zechirat Amalek by reading from a sefer Torah does not necessarily mean that there is a requirement that it be read in the presence of a minyan. Nevertheless, Rabbeinu Asher, Berachot 7:20, notes that the reading of Parshat Zachor is one of the rare instances where there is a biblical requirement for a minyan. Based on the comments of Rabbeinu Asher, Terumat HaDeshen 1:108, notes that if one lives in a community where there is no minyan, he should travel to a community where there is a minyan for the week that Parshat Zachor is read in order to fulfill mitzvat zechirat Amalek. He adds that it is more important to attend the services for the reading of Parshat Zachor than to attend the services for the reading of Megillat Esther. He wonders why many people travel to another town to attend the services for the reading of Megillat Esther and don't do the same for the reading of Parshat Zachor

Magen Avraham 685:1, notes that there is a justification for the practice of those who travel to another town to attend the Purim services and not the services for the reading of Parshat Zachor. He writes that even if Terumat HaDeshen is correct in assuming that mitzvat zechirat Amalek must be fulfilled in the presence of a minyan and that it must be fulfilled on an annual basis, there is no specific requirement that the mitzvah must be fulfilled on the Shabbat before Purim. The mitzvah may be fulfilled at any point in the year. Therefore, those who live in a community where there is no minyan travel to another town on Purim where they fulfill the mitzvah of zechirat Amalek with the reading of "VaYavo Amalek" (Shemot 17:8-16), the Torah reading for Purim morning, which records the original battle with Amalek.

The Relationship Between Mitzvat Zechirat Amalek and the Mitzvah to Destroy Amalek

Magen Avraham's assertion that one can fulfill mitzvat zechirat Amalek by reading VaYavo Amalek is not universally accepted. Mishna Berurah 685:16, contends that one cannot fulfill mitzvat zechirat Amalek by reading VaYavo Amalek. VaYavo Amalek only contains that actual account of the attack of Amalek on the Jewish people. It does not contain the command to destroy Amalek. According to Mishna Berurah, the mitzvah of zechirat Amalek can only be fulfilled by reading Parshat Zachor.

R. Yosef D. Soloveitchik (in Harerei Kedem 1:185) explains that the dispute between Magen Avraham and Mishna Berurah is based on the relationship between mitzvat zechirat Amalek and the mitzvah to destroy Amalek. Magen Avraham is of the opinion that mitzvat zechirat Amalek is not connected to the mitzvah to destroy Amalek. Therefore, there is no requirement to mention the mitzvah of destroying Amalek in order to fulfill mitzvat zechirat Amalek and one can fulfill the mitzvah by reading VaYavo Amalek. However, Mishna Berurah disagrees precisely because VaYavo Amalek makes no mention of the mitzvah to destroy Amalek.

The relationship between mitzvat zechirat Amalek and the mitzvah to destroy Amalek is relevant to the requirement to fulfill mitzvat zechirat Amalek in the presence of a minyan. R. Yitzchak of Karlin, Keren Orah, Berachot, Ch. 1, s.v. VEidi, explains that the reason why this mitzvah must be performed specifically in the presence of a minyan is because the mitzvah of destroying Amalek is incumbent upon the community and not upon any specific individual. [See R. Perlow, op. cit., for a lengthier discussion about the communal component of this mitzvah.]

Are Women Obligated in the Mitzvah of Zechirat Amalek?

Sefer HaChinuch, op. cit., writes that women are exempt from the mitzvah of zechirat Amalek because they are not obligated in the commandment to destroy Amalek. Apparently, Sefer HaChinuch is of the opinion that mitzvat zechirat Amalek is inextricably connected to the mitzvah of destroying Amalek. [See Minchat Chinuch, ad loc., who notes that any battle against Amalek would be considered a milchemet mitzvah (a mandatory war) and therefore questions whether women are actually exempt from the mitzvah of destroying Amalek.]

R. Sheur Z. Pradkin, Torat Chesed, Orach Chaim no. 37, notes that even if women are obligated to perform mitzvat zechirat Amalek, they may still be exempt from the reading of Parshat Zachor on the Shabbat prior to Purim. Women are exempt from time bound positive commandments (mitzvot aseh shehaz'man gerama). If mitzvat zechirat Amalek is merely reminding oneself of the battle of Amalek within a twelve month period, the mitzvah would not be considered a mitzvah aseh shehaz'man

gerama. However, if there is a specific obligation to read Parshat Zachor on the Shabbat prior to Purim, it would be considered a mitzvah asheh shehazman gerama and women are exempt.

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From: **Rabbi Dovid Siegel** [rdsiegel@torah.org] Sent: March 06, 2006 6:59 PM
To: haftorah@torah.org Subject: Haftorah - Parshas Tetzaveh

Haftorah Zachor - Parshas Tetzaveh Shmuel I 15:2

by Rabbi Dovid Siegel

This week's haftorah that we read before Purim deals with Hashem's command to Shaul Hamelech (King Saul) to annihilate Amalek. The time had come for the Jewish people to eradicate every trace of their earliest archenemy who paved the way for all subsequent battles. A pure descendent of the wicked Eisav, Amalek displayed no fear or reverence for Hashem and arrogantly waged war against Hashem's chosen people with overt blasphemy. Although the Jewish people successfully defeated Amalek his open blasphemy had not been addressed. Shaul Hamelech (King Saul) faithfully fulfilled most of his order and annihilated the entire Amalek save one soul, King Agag. Shaul destroyed almost all their animals but acquiesced in the Jewish people's plea to spare select sheep for sacrifices. Hashem immediately summoned the prophet Samuel to reprimand Shaul for his shortcomings. Shmuel told Shaul that his serious oversight cost him the throne and that his successor was already in place.

Shmuel proceeded to summon King Agag and gruesomely execute him. However, Shmuel's act came after Agag remained alive one last day. The Sages teach us that the Amalekite king took full advantage of Shaul's error. In a most unpredictable way Agag managed to spend his last hours of life procuring his nation. His attempt was successful and, against all odds, the entire nation of Amalek was reborn. (see Mesichta Megila 13a) This total reversal seems to reflect Hashem's interest in preserving Amalek. Although one day earlier Hashem decreed Amalek's total destruction the Jewish people apparently forfeited this privilege. Their recent error called for Amalek - the epitome of anti-Semitism - to continue to exist.

In order to properly understand this let us discover Hashem's purpose for this wicked nation and what benefit it serves. For this, we refer to the Jewish people's initial encounter with Amalek and the strategy used against him. The Torah states, "And when Moshe raised his hand the Jewish people overpowered (Amalek) and when he lowered his hand Amalek overpowered (the Jews)." (Shmos 17:11) These words peculiarly suggest that the Jewish nation's success against Amalek depended on Moshe Rabbeinu's raised hand?! The Sages ask this question and answer that Moshe Rabbeinu's hand served as a vehicle and gauge for the Jewish people's devotion to Hashem. (Mesichta Rosh Hashana Perek 3)

The Sages explain that the defeat of Amalek required extreme devotion and tefillah prayer. Hashem demanded His people to totally subject themselves to Him before responding to their dangerous predicament. Moshe's hands did not fight the war but they did propel the Jewish people into devoting every fiber of their heart and soul to Hashem. As long as their hearts were totally focused on Hashem's salvation He responded accordingly. But, the moment they deviated from total devotion Hashem no longer assisted them. Moshe Rabbeinu's hand was a perfect catalyst for this devotion. His totally raised hand reflected their total subjection to Hashem and the slightest lowering of it indicated their lack of focus on Him and predicted inevitable defeat.

This initial encounter reveals the need for Amalek and why Hashem permits him to attack Hashem's people. The Sages trace this back to the Jewish people's initial shortcoming in the desert. The Sages support this by citing the verse immediately preceding Amalek's arrival. Therein the Torah states, ".....For your testing Hashem and questioning, 'Does Hashem dwell in our midst or not?'" (Shmos 17:7) The Sages explain that the Jewish people became acclimated to their miraculous existence in the desert. Hashem so perfectly attended to their needs that they began questioning if Hashem's presence remained amongst them. Thus far, their relationship consisted of crying out to Hashem and Hashem coming to their rescue. Their recent stretch did not involve hardship and overt danger. Hashem so efficiently provided their needs - food, drink and shelter - that they felt totally secure in their incredibly perilous predicament. Consequently they did not feel Hashem's presence and began questioning if He truly remained amongst them. (see Rashi Shmos 17:8)

This absurdity reflected their lack of subjection to Hashem and unwillingness to recognize His constant involvement in their lives. In truth, the clouds of glory were themselves a manifestation of Hashem's glorious presence. Yet, instead of praising Hashem for every moment of existence the Jewish people took all their favors for granted and began searching for Him. This absolutely unwarranted behavior called for immediate response and Amalek was summoned to send the shock. He was notorious for his unwillingness to recognize Hashem and subject himself to a

supreme power. Amalek reflected, in extreme proportions, the Jewish people's subtle - but similar - imperfection. They immediately responded and reversed their line of thinking. During the attack they remained transfixed on Hashem's salvation thereby rectifying their lack of devotion. Hashem responded to their abrupt turnabout and delivered them from the hands of their enemy.

With this newly gained insight we return to Shaul Hamelech's subtle - yet serious - deviation. The Sages reveal that Shaul Hamelech found it difficult to accept Hashem's command to annihilate an entire nation. He compassionately questioned, "If Amalekite men are sinful why must the children perish and their cattle die?" (Mesichta Yoma 22b) Although these concerns came from the heart they reflected Shaul Hamelech's faint unwillingness to subject himself to Hashem's supreme intellect. His error together with the Jewish people's weakness reinstated their earlier shortcoming and gave rise to Amalek. Regrettably, the Jewish people and their king did not seize the opportunity to overcome their deep-seated problem. They forfeited through this their one time chance and Amalek was granted the right to exist. It was then determined that anti-Semitism would remain and be on call to remind the Jewish people to totally subject themselves to Him.

This pattern reappeared in the days of Purim. The Jewish people became acclimated to their lifestyle in the diaspora and reduced their focus on Hashem. At their first opportunity to display Persian loyalty the Jews of Shushan eagerly attended a royal feast despite Mordechai's stern warning. Severe immorality reigned at the feast, as would be expected at occasions of that nature. In addition, the sacred vessels of the Bais Hamikdash were exposed and defiled but the Jewish people were indifferent to all. The Sages reveal that, under cover, this royal feast actually was meant to celebrate Hashem's rejection of His people. The Persian king Achashveirosh believed that he accurately calculated the Jewish people's promised day of return. Once this did not happen he was convinced it never would. In honor of his newly gained control over the Jewish nation he gleefully celebrated and arrogantly served in the sacred Bais Hamikdash vessels. (see Mesichta Megila 11b)

They should have protested and fainted at the sight of the vessels but they were so insensitive to Hashem that they did not even respond! Such indifference called for immediate action and once again Amalek was called to give the shock. Haman, a pure descendent of Amalek suddenly rose to power and reminded the Jewish people to focus on Hashem. He influenced the king to involve the entire world in a one day merciless frenzy of total Jewish annihilation. Through Mordechai and Esther's guidance the Jewish people responded with three consecutive days of prayer and fasting. This total subjection to Hashem reestablished the Jewish people's long lost relationship with Him. Hashem miraculously responded and Haman and tens of thousands of Amalekites were decimated without a single Jewish casualty. The Jewish people responded to Hashem's display of love and rededicated themselves to His Torah in an unprecedented manner. (see Mesichta Shabbos 88a)

Let us pray to Hashem that we learn our Purim lesson well and merit to reestablish our relationship with Hashem. Once we totally subject ourselves to Hashem He will undoubtedly respond and end our seemingly endless troubles. May the day soon arrive when Eisav's descendent Amalek will be totally destroyed thus clearing the path for Hashem's absolute rule over all of humanity. Amen.

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Peninim on the Torah
by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum
- Parshas Tetzaveh

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum Hebrew Academy of Cleveland

And they shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination, to kindle the lamp continuously. (27:20)

The future tense indicates that the oil would have to be brought continuously. Sforno explains that the mitzvah to kindle the Menorah was an ongoing one and was to continue on past the Inauguration ceremony of the Mishkan. There does, however, seem to be an inconsistency in the text. The lighting of the Menorah was apparently related to the Inauguration of the Mishkan, while the term "continuously" implies that it is an on-going mitzvah. How does it fit in with the Inauguration? In his

commentary to Parashas Behaalosecha, Rashi explains that the kindling of the Menorah was an extremely important task, one that was worthy of being included in the chanukas, Inauguration, of the Mishkan. The Ramban challenges this exegesis, asserting that inauguration, by its very definition, means a "one time deal," performed at the commencement of a project. The lighting of the Menorah, however, is an on-going mitzvah. How are we to reconcile "on-going" with "inauguration"?

The Ramban cites a Midrash that declares that a day will come when there will be no functioning Bais Hamikdash in the sense that Korbanos will be offered and the Jewish People will assemble three times a year. It will stand, but there will be no service. It will be specifically at this time that a group of Aharon's descendants, all Kohanim, the Chashmonaim, will catalyze the reinauguration of the Bais Hamikdash. This is, of course, a reference to Chanukah, the festival that marks the rededication of the Bais Hamikdash. Thus, Aharon's lighting of the Menorah is foreshadowing a time when Aharon's descendants will inaugurate the Temple service - again. This was the focus of Chanukah. The rededication of the Bais Hamikdash was the most important aspect of the Chashmonean victory over the Greeks.

This preface leads up to a noteworthy question posed to Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita. We celebrate the festival commemorating the miracle of Chanukah with an emphasis on publicizing the miracle that occurred there. A man approached the rav with the following query. He had in his possession an old Chanukah Menorah made of ornate silver. It was an inheritance that had been passed down for generations. A work of art, its value was well into the thousands of dollars. It was inspirational, as well as beautiful. Ever since his marriage, he had used this Menorah for kindling the Chanukah lights.

Prior to Chanukah, the man's young son had come home from school with a prize he had won for hasmadah, diligence, in Torah study - a small brass Menorah. What should the father do? Should he continue using the ornate heirloom Menorah, or, as a sign of encouragement to his young son, should he use his small, brass Menorah?

At first glance, Rav Zilberstein thought that, since Chanukah is a time in which hiddur mitzvah, beautifying the mitzvah, plays such a pivotal role, he should use the silver Menorah. On the other hand, what greater symbol of pirsumei nissa, publicizing the miracle, is there than using a child's prize, a Menorah earned for diligence in Torah study? In a generation aptly called the "me" generation, a child who gives up his time to devote himself to Torah study personifies our true victory over the Greeks - and the victory of everyone else who has tried to destroy our inextricable relationship with the Almighty. This is why we fought the Greeks; this is why we won. We have a responsibility to publicize this fact. I recently attended a wedding, which to me seemed a bit excessive, especially since the father of the kallah, bride, did not have that kind of money. Noticing what must have seemed a disapproving look on my face, the father, a good friend of mine, said, "My parents were Holocaust survivors. The Nazis sought to destroy us all. This is my revenge on them. We are here today, a generation later, marrying off our children. Their plan has failed. The Jewish nation has once again prevailed. I am publicizing this. It is my pirsumei nissa!"

What a beautiful inspiration to us all. This does not mean that we should borrow money so that we can spend it ostentatiously. It just presents the idea that we must take pride in our existence and pay gratitude to He Who has always protected us from harm and Who continues to sustain us, and, yes, it is also a form of reciprocity. We have survived with the help of Hashem - and with His blessing - we will continue to thrive.

Bring near to yourself Aharon your brother... to minister to Me. 28:1)

The democratic process of choosing a leader was not applied to Aharon HaKohen. Hashem selected him. There was no room for discussion. Hashem, in His infinite wisdom, felt that Aharon was the most suitable person for the position of Kohen Gadol and future progenitor of the Kehunah, Priesthood, in Klal Yisrael. The Midrash points out the uniqueness of this choice. Hashem did not simply choose Aharon - He was mekarev, brought him close. The Midrash distinguishes between Avraham Avinu, Yaakov Avinu and Moshe Rabbeinu, who were also selected for their exalted positions by Hashem. Yet, they were the individuals who had to bring themselves close. Yisro was brought close by Hashem, but was not selected for a position. Rachav was likewise brought close, but not chosen. Aharon was the only one - who after being chosen - was also brought near.

In other words, no man was more suitable for this position than Aharon. The very idea that Hashem brought Aharon close indicates that he had an affinity to the position. He was a natural for the Kehunah. Why? Aharon HaKohen's domain was the Mishkan and its holy service. The Mishkan functioned as a moving symbol of the Revelation at Har Sinai. The Mishkan was the focal point in this world for a Jew to come close to Hashem: to sense, feel and experience the sanctity that had permeated the nation when the Torah was given to them. It created a symbolic harmony between Heaven and earth, between man and Hashem, between the physical/material and the spiritual. All this was symbolized by - and emanated from - the Mishkan. The Kohen facilitated this experience. It was his province, his raison d'être as the one who

guided the Jew's developing relationship with the Divine. It was for this task that Hashem chose Aharon. It was for this mission that he was the most appropriate.

Why? Because Aharon was an individual who divested himself of himself. He had no anochius, "I" complex. He never thought of himself - only of the other person. He was never envious of another. Even when his younger brother was chosen to be Klal Yisrael's leader, Aharon came forward and joyfully embraced him with love. This same attitude prevailed in his relationship with the common man. He sought to promote peace among his fellow man and to unite husband and wife in a harmonious matrimonial relationship.

We now understand why it was Hashem who had to select and promote Aharon as Kohen Gadol. Aharon would never have taken the position on his own. He would have felt himself unworthy and would, therefore, have deferred it to someone else. It was specifically his outstanding humility that rendered him the most felicitous person for the position.

Humility is not a simple middah, character trait, to acquire. This is especially true when one achieves a position of leadership. People turn to Torah leaders, rabbanim, roshei yeshivah, admorim, for every bit of guidance, both in a physical/material as well as in a spiritual sense. This can detract from one's focus. There are those gedolim, Torah giants, who are revered by all aspects of the Jewish spectrum. They are constantly sought out for their advice, guidance and blessing. At times, it is just their smile that one seeks. I just had occasion to read Rabbi Sholom Smith's introduction to his latest volume in the "Rav Pam" series, Rav Pam on the Festivals - and I was moved. Everything he writes about the venerable Rosh HaYeshivah of Torah Vodaath is something I felt every time I had the privilege to meet with him. Regardless of his physical state, the pain he sustained, he made time for the boys from Cleveland whose annual Torah trip to New York always included a visit with the Rosh HaYeshiva. Indeed, he made us feel that it was his privilege to host us. He accorded the greatest respect to each of the rebbeim. He had no problem posing for a picture, even if a young student inadvertently asked him to "move over a little." The paradigm of humility, he was a true descendant of Aharon HaKohen. Indeed, he would often say that he was a Kohen hamevarech ba'avahavah, "a Kohen who blessed his people with love."

I close with a quote from Rav Pam's introduction to his classic Atarah LaMelech, cited by Rabbi Smith. His overwhelming desire in life was "to see my talmidim, students, at the peak of character development, crowned with the crown of beautiful middos and a pleasant approach to their interaction with their fellow human beings, as men of true spiritual striving who give honor to Hashem and embody in their lives the pasuk (Yeshayah 49:3), "Yisrael, in whom I take glory."

If this is what a rebbe wants for his talmidim, then apparently he must be a walking and breathing example of these noble and lofty goals. Rav Pam certainly set this standard.

You shall take the two Shoham Stones and engrave upon them the names of the Bnei Yisrael. (28:9)

The Abaranel explains that the names of the Shevatim, Tribes, were engraved on the Shoham stones, which were later attached to the Kispos haEiphod, shoulder straps of Eiphod, so that Aharon HaKohen would never lose sight of the Jewish People. Whenever he raised his hands, the names would be before him. These stones would serve as a constant reminder. This is the function of a Torah leader: to never lose sight of his flock. He should focus on providing for them at every juncture, keeping them on his mind constantly. Once Horav Aharon zl, mBelz sent for a doctor. The physician entered the room to see the holy Rebbe engrossed, deep in thought. "What is the Rebbe thinking?" the doctor queried. "Only good things for the Jews," was the Rebbe's immediate response. This can be carried out only when one does not stop thinking about his fellow Jews even for a moment.

The Amshinover Rebbe, zl, once said that a rebbe of chasidim must be acutely aware of three things: a) when he sits on the rabbinic "chair" he should imagine that he is sitting on a bed of nails; b) prior to reading the kvittel, note with the petitioner's request on it, he should be aware of its contents; c) the troubles of the petitioner should grieve him as if they were his own. Moshe Rabbeinu epitomized this type of leadership. He saw the troubles that the Jews were suffering, and he felt them. A leader does not just care about the members of his flock; he actually feels their pain.

With this idea in mind, it behooves the individual who has poured out his troubles to the tzaddik, righteous leader, to also share with him the good, the relief, the blessing that he receives later. The tzaddik shares in your pain. Why should he not also share in your joy? Indeed, the Imrei Emes would cite the pasuk in Yirmiyah 4:22, "They are wise at doing evil, but know not how to do good," embellishing it, saying, "They go to the wise to lament their troubles, but do not know then when they are the recipients of good."

The Piaczesner Rebbe, zl, was an individual who exemplified this sensitivity to his chasidim. He spent literally every penny that he had to redeem those of his chasidim that had been conscripted to the Polish army. He bribed and used every form of guile to subvert their efforts to take these young Jewish men from their

homes. When he was queried as to why he went to such great lengths on behalf of his chassidim, he replied, "Any Rebbe who is not prepared to descend to Gehinom to rescue his chassid from falling into the depths of spiritual oblivion is not a Rebbe."

There are a number of versions to the following story concerning Horav Moshe Leib Sassover, zl. I cite the most accepted one, which was related by Horav David Leib Chortkaver, zl. The sainted Sassover left This World for his eternal rest. When he came before the Heavenly Tribunal, the psak din, holy judgment, was that he be granted a lofty place in Gan Eden. The Sassover refused to go - unless he could take with him those souls presently in Gehinom who, during their lifetime, had given him money. The alternative to this was that he join them in Gehinom. After deliberation, the Sassover was "permitted" to enter Gehinom for one hour, during which he succeeded in removing those souls from there.

The Tiferes Shlomo explains that this middah, characteristic, is an extension of the spiritual plateau reached by none other than Moshe Rabbeinu. Throughout his tenure as leader - and even earlier as he walked out on the streets of Egypt - he observed his brothers' travail and was personally pained by it. As a leader, he even said to Hashem, "Erase my name from Your Book" (Shemos 32:32), unless he was assured that Klal Yisrael's sin concerning the Golden Calf would be forgiven. Aharon HaKohen, the other leader of Klal Yisrael, was to carry the mishpat Bnei Yisrael, "Judgment of Bnei Yisrael," on his heart in the Choshen HaMishpat, on which were engraved the names of the Tribes. He was always to remember them and to accept upon himself personally to "suffer" the judgment that otherwise would be leveled against Klal Yisrael.

In addition, the Tiferes Shlomo posits that this is the function of every Torah leader: to feel the pain and, thereby, remove some of the travail that would otherwise be decreed against Klal Yisrael. He interprets this into the pasuk in Devarim 18:15, which addresses "a Navi from your midst, from your brethren, like me." We are enjoined to listen to the words of the Navi emes, true prophet, who will be like Moshe. How are we to understand this? Are we not taught that there never will arise another Navi of the calibre of Moshe? How then could this Navi emes be like "me," like Moshe? The Torah is teaching us that while no other Navi will achieve Moshe's spiritual stature in prophecy, but his ability to be moser nefesh, devotion to the point of self sacrifice, can be successfully realized by those who follow in his leadership footsteps. In other words, our spiritual leadership, whose devotion extends to the needs and travail of all Jews, are the modern day Moshe Rabbeinus of each generation.

You shall fill it with stone mounting, four rows of stone. (28:17)

Aharon HaKohen served in the Mishkan wearing eight Priestly vestments. Among the Kohen Gadol's vestments, the Choshen and Eiphod had singular significance, since these made up the seat of the precious stones with which they were adorned. The Choshen had twelve individual stones, each one representing another tribe. The Eiphod had the two Shoham stones on its shoulder straps. Obviously, the selection of each individual stone with its corresponding Shevet, tribe, was based in profound spiritual rationale. We will focus on the stones of Yosef and Binyamin, the two sons of Rachel Imeinu.

Yosef's stone was the Shoham stone. This stone had another opportunity to be used as the two stones of the Kispos haEiphod, shoulder straps of the Eiphod. The fact that on these two stones were engraved the names of all the Tribes indicates its uniqueness in being a stone representing harmony, unity and homogeneity. All of the Tribes were included in the stone of Yosef. The Sfas Emes explains that indeed Yosef is the shoshon, root, of the Shevatim; it represents and transcends them. On his deathbed, Yaakov Avinu said to Yosef, "From there, he shepherded the stone of Yisrael" (Bereishis 49:24). The word even, stone, can be seen as a contraction of two words, av, father, and ben, son. Rashi explains that this contradiction alludes to the family, for it is the building block upon which the nation is built. Yosef became the foundation stone upon which Klal Yisrael would be built. Yosef was me'acheid, unified all the Tribes, under one banner.

We find that when Yaakov Avinu ran from Eisav, he stopped along the road and had his famous dream. When he lay down he took one stone, which, according to Chazal, was actually comprised of twelve little stones, which became one stone, foreshadowing the twelve Tribes, which would descend from Yaakov. The Zohar HaKadosh draws a parallel between the twelve stones of Yaakov that became one and Yosef's Shoham stone which included the twelve Tribes.

Binyamin's stone was the Yashpah stone. Because of his young age, Binyamin was the only brother who had nothing to do with the sale of Yosef. In other words, he was the only one who was not tainted by a lack of Kibud av, proper respect for his father. Horav Moshe Reis, Shlita, cites the story in the Talmud Kiddushin 31a, which relates how a stone from the Choshen was lost, and the only person who had a similar stone was Dama ben Nesinah, a gentile living in Ashkelon. When the emissaries from Yerushalayim came to him, he said he could not help them because his father was sleeping in the room in which the stone was kept for safekeeping. He was prepared to forego a huge profit if it meant infringing on his father's rest. Which one of the twelve

stones was lost? In the Yerushalmi Kiddushin 20:1, Chazal say that it was the Yashpah stone of Binyamin. Incredible! When Hashem sought to portray a situation that personified true Kibud av, He chose a case that involved the Yashpah stone. The stone of the brother/tribe, which symbolized Kibud av.

Chazal characterize Rachel Imeinu's distinction in that she gave the simanim, signs, to Leah, her sister, and did not reveal this to Yaakov. Because of her exceptional ability to be silent, she merited children who exemplified silence: Binyamin who did not reveal Yosef's sale; Shaul HaMelech who did not reveal that he had been chosen as king, and Esther HaMalkah, who did not reveal her background. This is alluded to in Binyamin's stone: Yashpah - a contraction of the words yeish, and peh; there is a mouth, but it is silent. Rachel taught us that there is a time and place to speak and a time and place to remain silent.

Sponsored in honor of the forthcoming marriage of our son, Moshe Tzvi n'y to Adina Braum shetichye yehi ratzon shetizke livnos bayis ne'eman b'yisrael Rabbi and Mrs. Leibel Scheinbaum Peninim mailing list Peninim@shemayisrael.com http://www.shemayisrael.com/mailman/listinfo/peninim_shemayisrael.com

From: Weekly Sedra United Synagogue London [DAF-HASHAVUA@SHAMASH.ORG] on behalf of Rafael Salasnik [rafi@BRIJNET.ORG] Sent: March 08, 2006 6:02 PM To: DAF-HASHAVUA@SHAMASH.ORG Subject: daf-hashavua Tetzaveh 5766/2006

... LAWS & CUSTOMS OF PURIM

By Rabbi Dr Michael J Harris, Hampstead Synagogue

The mitzvot of Purim enhance one's enjoyment of the day, as well as ensuring that the needy are not forgotten.

The central mitzvot of the day are:

- * Hearing the Megilla both in the evening and again in the morning read from the special Megilla scroll - preferably in Shul, where there are many people present together.

- * Mattanot Laevyonim - giving at least one gift each to at least two poor people.

- * Mishloach Manot - giving at least two ready-to-eat items to at least one friend.

- * Seudat Purim - the festive Purim meal.

(The last three laws should be observed on the day of 14th Adar).

The Al HaNissim prayer is added to the Amidah at Ma'ariv on the night of the 14th Adar, and to Shacharit and Mincha on the day of the 14th. It is also included in benching.

The Gemara states that one is obliged to drink so much on Purim that one becomes unable to distinguish between "Cursed be Haman" and "Blessed be Mordechai". Later authorities emphasise that one should only drink heavily if this will not lead to improper behaviour or the inability to daven or bench properly.

On the afternoon before Purim (Ta'anit Esther) it is customary to donate Machatzit HaShekel, the half-shekel. We give three times half the fixed coin of our own time and place - in Britain, 3 x 50 pence. During Temple times, the half-shekel used to be given in Adar to fund the communal sacrifices. Three times the half-shekel is donated because in the relevant passage in the Torah, the word terumah, "offering", appears three times.

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/>

Covenant & Conversation

Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from

Sir Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth [From 2 years ago 5764]

<http://www.chief Rabbi.org/tt-index.html>

Tetzaveh - Do Clothes Make the Man?

"You shall bring forward your brother Aaron, with his sons from among the Israelites to serve me as priests: Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, Eleazar and Itamar, the sons of Aaron. You shall make only clothes for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty." With these words a new phenomenon makes its appearance in Jewish life. Never before have we encountered robes of office, formal insignia marking off their wearers as holy people charged with a particular function in the religious life.

Indeed this whole section of the biblical narrative strikes us as strange, given all we know of what has come before. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not wear special clothes. Nor did Moses. They were shepherds. They dressed simply. In any event, what they wore is utterly irrelevant to the biblical message. As Erich Auerbach noted in his classic study, 'Odysseus' Scar' (published in his book Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature), the great difference between Homer and the Torah is that Homer constantly describes appearances; the Torah rarely does.

Homer is fascinated by the play of light on surfaces. The Torah is deeply disinterested in surfaces: landscapes, portraits, physical descriptions. With few exceptions - only when it is necessary to understand what happens - the Torah does not tell us what its heroes and heroines looked like or what they wore. The biblical text is, in Auerbach's phrase, "fraught with background," meaning that the physical setting of its narratives is unspecified in the text, inviting us, the listeners, to supply it from our own imagination. If Homer is like television, the Torah is like radio. It focuses not on the image but the voice.

It does so for a deeply serious reason. There is a definitive moment in Samuel I when the prophet is commanded by G-d to anoint a new king. Saul has failed. He is too temperamental, insecure and concerned with popularity. He fails to fulfil the divine command. (Incidentally, this is a classic case where the Bible does emphasise appearances, precisely to show that they are misleading. Saul, when we first encounter him, is described as "a young man in his prime; no one among the Israelites was handsomer than he; he was a head taller than any of the people." He had physical stature but not moral stature. That is the message the text seeks to convey.)

Samuel is told to go to the home of Jesse (Yishay) because one of his sons is the man chosen to be king:

When they arrived and he saw Eliab, he thought: "Surely the Lord's anointed stands before Him." But the Lord said to Samuel, "Pay no attention to his appearance or his stature, for I have rejected him. For not as man sees [does the Lord see]; man sees only what is visible, but the Lord sees into the heart." Judaism -- the religion of inwardness, not appearances; of ethics, not power; of character, not the formal dress of office - is not the place we turn to, to find the specification of official uniforms. On at least two famous occasions we find biblical heroes donning robes of majesty. There is Joseph in Egypt:

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, "Make way!" Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. And there is Mordechai in Persia:

[Haman] answered the king, "For the man the king delights to honor, 8 have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. 9 Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!' " "Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordechai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended." So Haman got the robe and the horse. He robed Mordechai, and led him on horseback through the city streets, proclaiming before him, "This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!" The non-Jewish, non-Israelite setting of these passages is obvious. That - Tenakh seems to imply - is how others do these things; not us. Robes, rings, chains of office, chariots, horses: these are external signs of glory, unworthy of a people who judge authority by humility, and majesty by obedience. It is hardly coincidental from the Torah's perspective that it is precisely Pharaonic Egypt and Xerxes' (Ahasuerus) Persia, that celebrate the visual trappings of official dress, who also issue the first decrees of genocide against the Jewish people. A culture that worships external symbols of power will in the end lack the inwardness and humanity to respect the dignity of the powerless.

Nor is this all. At least five episodes in the book of Bereishith turn on the subject of clothes (the nineteenth century English writer Thomas Carlyle wrote a book, Sartor Resartus, dedicated to a "philosophy of clothes." In a certain sense Bereishith is an anti-philosophy of clothes). There are Esau's bigdei chamudot, "best clothes," that Jacob puts on to take Isaac's blessing. There is the ketonet pasim, the "richly embroidered cloak" or "coat of many colours" that Jacob has made for his favourite son, Joseph. There are the clothes of a [temple] prostitute that Tamar puts on when she removes her "widow's garments" [bigdei almenutah] in order to attract Judah. There is the begged, cloak or robe, that Joseph leaves in the hand of Potiphar's wife when he flees from her attempt to seduce him. And there are, as mentioned above, the special robes [bigdei shesh] and insignia of office that Joseph wears as second-in-command to Pharaoh.

One fact links all these episodes. Garments are used to deceive. Jacob wears Esau's clothes to deceive his blind father Isaac when he puts out his hand to feel him. The brothers stain Joseph's cloak with goat's blood to persuade their father Jacob that he has been killed by a wild animal. Tamar changes her clothes and puts on a veil to hide her identity from Judah. Potiphar's wife uses the robe Joseph has abandoned to bolster her claim that he tried to rape her. And Joseph uses his new-found appearance as a senior Egyptian ruler to hide his identity from his brothers ("Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him").

It comes therefore as both a shock and a confirmation when we discover that the Hebrew word for "garment," begged, also means "betrayal" (as in the confession, Ashamnu, bagadnu). That is precisely what garments are in Bereishith - instruments of deception and betrayal. Indeed that is the message conveyed by the very first reference to garments in the Torah, when Adam and Eve, against G-d's instruction, eat from the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD G-d as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD G-d among the trees of the garden. But the LORD G-d called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" Clothes were the sign of the first great betrayal, the first breaking of a divine command.

Clothes are what separates nature from culture. Desmond Morris once called man "the naked ape." Of course, that is precisely wrong. Homo sapiens is the non-naked animal, the only being in creation whose external appearance is fabricated, made, a detachable second-skin. Hence the gap in human affairs between appearance and reality, the appearance we make by (among other things) the clothes we wear and the reality of what we think, plan and feel. Shakespeare has Hamlet deliver to his mother the queen a remarkable speech, the thrust of which is that not only is he dressed like a mourner; in addition, he actually does mourn:

Seems, madam! Nay, it is; I know not seems. 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother, Nor customary suits of solemn black, Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath, No, nor the fruitful river in the eye, Nor the dejected havior of the visage, Together with all forms, moods, shows of grief, That can denote me truly: these, indeed, seem; For they are actions that a man might play; But I have that within which passeth show; These but the trappings and the suits of woe. The Torah's point is Hamlet's also: there is a difference between "is" and "seems" - between what we really feel and "the trappings and the suits" of what we wear.

If we are to understand Judaism we must never forget that it represents a specific moment in - as well as an eternal truth about - the history of mankind. Neither Moses, nor even Abraham, are primeval figures (as they would be if the Torah were myth). They are "latecomers." The great symbol of ancient civilization, the Tower of Babel, precedes the call of G-d to Abraham. Judaism does not represent the birth of civilization; it represents a critique of civilization. It is precisely when human beings discover technology, build cities, construct advanced methods of warfare (the Egyptian horse-drawn chariot is the key biblical example) and erect self-serving monuments that the human potential for evil becomes seriously destructive. Empires elevate rulers by degrading the mass of mankind.

One of the most visible symbols of empire is robes of office. They exalt the few at the cost of the many. They represent a thoroughly hierarchical society of a kind to which (as we pointed out last week) Judaism is essentially opposed. The English language lacks a word like the Hebrew begged, which links "garments" and "betrayal." But it has another one that covers roughly the same territory, namely "sophisticated." On the one hand it has a positive connotation - it means "refined, cultured." On the other it has an ancient and disreputable history deriving from the pre-Socratic philosophers who used to teach for money and were known (and criticised by Plato) for their persuasive but fallacious arguments. Thus "sophisticate" also means "to spoil, adulterate, corrupt, pervert, mislead." Civilization always runs the risk of substituting "seems" for "is." Those who dress like kings may have the heart of slaves, fearful, resentful and vindictive. Those who wear the robes of holy people may (like the sons of Samuel) be corrupt. That is why Jewish sensibility is, on the whole, sceptical of official uniforms. G-d sees, and teaches us to see, the inward person, what Hamlet called, "that within which passeth show."

Why then did G-d command Moses to set in motion the making of special garments for the priests, "for glory and for beauty"? The answer lies in the analysis given by the nineteenth century sociologist Max Weber. Weber was fascinated by the question of leadership. What is it that gives some individuals authority over others? His most famous insight - it has become part of the language of everyday speech - is that certain rare figures have what he called charisma. Charismatic leaders, by the force of their personality, are able to exercise influence over others. They speak to their fears, their concerns, hopes and dreams. They articulate a narrative that explains them to themselves. They construct (or, in the case of prophets, receive) a vision that motivates and moves. They are transformational. They do not leave a group or nation as it was before. They do not (as some leaders do) merely "keep the show on the road" or "keep the ship from sinking." They change the people with whom they come into contact. They are the midwives of something new.

But charisma begins to die almost as soon as it is born. Charismatic authority is strictly personal. It is unique to the individual who wields it, and it can never be replicated over time. Indeed it is essential to the survival of the group that it is not replicated over time. A charismatic leader is an agent of change, but a group, in order

to survive, needs a form of leadership that is resistant to change; that is, instead, a vehicle of continuity, tradition and stability. Without this, the group will not persist long into the future. That is why, after the appearance in its midst of a charismatic leader, the group must undergo what Weber called the routinization of charisma. This is the process whereby a certain form of authority is vested, not in an individual-as-individual but in an individual (or group) as bearers-of-an-office. Thus charisma is handed down from generation to generation in an orderly and predictable way, through laws of succession, together with rules regulating the behaviour of the holders of the office and their relationship to the group as a whole.

The prime example of the routinization of charisma is contained in Tetzaveh, in the process through which Moses invests priestly authority in Aaron and his sons. The bigdei kehunah, the "priestly vestments" are its visible symbol. The cohanim are - by virtue of birth and descent, not personal qualities - the carriers of sacred office. Their work is holy. Their domain is the Tabernacle, the physical embodiment of sacred space. They are charged with mediating between the people and G-d. Their clothes mark their office and role.

Not accidentally, therefore, is Tetzaveh the only sedra between the beginning of Exodus and the end of Deuteronomy in which the name of Moses does not appear. The most important fact about routinized charisma is that it exists when the charismatic leader (i.e. Moses) is no longer there. We now understand precisely the connection between the sedra of Tetzaveh and the episode of the Golden Calf (later in the book of Shemot but, according to most commentators, earlier in time). The Golden Calf was a response to the crisis posed by Moses' absence ("This Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt - we don't know what has become of him"). It illustrated the weakness of charismatic authority: powerful in its presence but debilitating in its absence. The Israelites had to become the people who would continue to serve G-d after Moses had left them. That is what the Tabernacle, the sacrifices and the priesthood represent: continuity, the ability to sustain long into the future the experience of Sinai and the presence, in the midst of the people, of G-d.

A prophet needs no official vestments. His or her authority is charismatic, personal, spontaneous, unrepeatable. But a priest needs bigdei kehunah, "priestly vestments," to show that in his case the office is greater than the person; it continues from generation to generation; it represents stability and "the persistence of faith" through time. The greatness of biblical Israel is that it never completely routinized charisma. From Moses to Malachi prophets arose to "speak truth to power" and prevent the service of G-d from becoming merely routine. But had there been only prophets, and no priests, Israel would have disappeared long ago. It would have lacked the essential ability to sustain its mission over time.

Partly because of the prophets, biblical Israel was able to correct the dangers of the routinization of charisma. As the commentators point out in their remarks on the phrase mamlechet kohanim, "a kingdom of priests," the word cohen itself means both "a prince" and "a servant." The sons of Aaron may have been aristocrats of the spirit, but they were also servants, of both the people and G-d. The last of the prophets, Malachi, has a wonderful description of the role of a priest:

True instruction was in his mouth And nothing false was on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, And turned many from sin. For the lips of a priest preserve knowledge, And from his mouth men should seek instruction For he is a messenger of the Almighty LORD. And in a famous phrase, the book of Psalms contains the prayer, "May your priests be clothed in righteousness." It is clear then that the phrase in Tetzaveh, "for glory and for beauty" does not mean "for the glory and beauty of the priest." It means "for the glory of G-d and the beauty of His presence" (see Sforno). The task of the cohen - and the message of his clothes - was to be a "signal of transcendence," to point in himself to something beyond himself, to be a living symbol of the divine presence in the midst of the nation.

The last chapter in this story, however, is the most remarkable. It happened after the destruction of the Second Temple and the end of a functioning priesthood. It was then that kehunah was essentially universalized and democratized. In prayer, everyone became a priest. Each synagogue throughout the world was a miniature Temple. Through teshuvah (repentance) of Yom Kippur, each Jew was like a High Priest atoning for sins. "From the day the Temple was destroyed," said the sages in one of their most haunting aphorisms, "the Holy One blessed be He has nothing in this world apart from the four cubits of halakhah." Halakhah invested, and invests, every detail of daily life with the charisma of holiness. No longer did anyone need a special uniform to single them out as priests or holy people because the Jewish people as a whole had become, individually and collectively, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

If the cohen represented the routinization of charisma, Judaism - through its halakhic sanctification of everyday life - eventually became the charismaticization of routine."

[From last year]

From: office@etzion.org.il on behalf of Yeshivat Har Etzion Office
[office@etzion.org.il] Sent: March 16, 2005 To: yhe-parsha@etzion.org.il Subject: PARSHA65 -24: Parashat Vayikra - Zakhor Rav Yaakov Medan YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

This parasha series is dedicated in memory of Michael Jotkowitz, z"l.

<http://vbm-torah.org/archive/parsha65/24-65vayikra-zakhor.htm>

PARASHAT VAYIKRA - SHABBAT ZAKHOR

Amalek

By Rav Yaakov Medan

A. "As if to prevail over God"

The most obvious question presented to us by the obligation to wipe out Amalek is the moral one. Why are we required to erase the entire Amalekite nation, regardless of their behavior; why does G-d Himself also "declare war" on them?

This commandment would seem to contain two elements that are altogether "immoral" in human notions of morality:

i. The command of complete eradication - young and old, women and children. Although these details are not mentioned specifically in the Torah, we interpret the command thus on the basis of the instruction issued by the prophet Shemuel: "Now go and smite Amalek and destroy all that is theirs; you shall have no mercy on them, you shall put to death men and women, CHILDREN AND INFANTS, CATTLE AND SHEEP, CAMELS AND DONKEYS" (Shemuel I 15:3).

ii. The unlimited time-frame for this revenge: "G-d is at war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Shemot 17:16), and "When the Lord your G-d gives you rest..." (Devarim 25:19). Accordingly, Shemuel declares in God's name, "I have remembered what Amalek did to Israel, lying in wait for them on the way when they came out of Egypt" (Shemuel I 15:2) - some four hundred and thirty years after Amalek's sin.

Chazal express these moral questions in the words of Shaul, who is commanded to wage this war:

"Shaul came to the city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley": R. Bena'a taught: He began to question the law of the 'egla arufa.' He said to God: 'Master of the Universe, that person kills - and this [calf] must have its neck broken to atone' [the sense here is ambiguous; the claim may be expressed either as a statement or as a question]. The Rabbis taught: He began to question God's command: 'Master of the Universe, thus Shemuel said to me: 'Go and smite Amalek, and destroy them completely....' A person may sin, but how can an animal be guilty?' A heavenly voice declared: 'Do not be overly righteous - more than your Creator.'" (Midrash Kohelet Zuta, parasha 7)

In any event, the Midrash provides an indirect response to Shaul's claims:

"Reish Lakish said: Anyone who becomes merciful towards the cruel, ends up being cruel towards the merciful. From where do we learn this? From Shaul, as it is written, "He smote Nov, the city of the priests..." First [in Sefer Shemuel, when Shaul is commanded to completely wipe out Amalek], we read, "Shaul and the nation had pity..." and ultimately - concerning Nov, the city of the kohanim - he did not have pity on the merciful ones."

The Midrash makes effective use of the stylistic similarity between Shemuel's command to annihilate Amalek - a command that Shaul failed to fulfill properly - and the annihilation of the city of Nov, which did take place:

"Now go and SMITE Amalek and destroy utterly all that they have; you shall not have mercy on them, you shall put to death MEN AND WOMEN, CHILDREN AND INFANTS, CATTLE AND SHEEP, CAMELS AND DONKEYS" (Shemuel I 15:3), compared with

"He SMOTE the city of Nov by the sword, MEN AND WOMEN, CHILDREN AND INFANTS, CATTLE, DONKEYS AND SHEEP, by the sword" (Shemuel I 22:19)

The Midrash provides no explanation of how God's response actually answers the true claim that Shaul presents, but it does support the Divine response: "Do not be too righteous' - do not [try to] be more righteous than your Creator." Indeed, Shaul is not more righteous than God, for he ends up destroying Nov, the city of the kohanim. But still, the Midrash contains nothing that "justifies" the command to annihilate Amalek.

We shall return to this midrash. First, it should be noted that Chazal and the early midrashim give almost no direct attention to these questions. Sages of later generations addressed them at greater length, and we find a certain indirect treatment of them by the earlier Sages. In any event, the question that almost all the commentators ask is, in what way was Amalek's sin more terrible than that of all the other nations that waged war against Am Yisrael, or that of all the nations that subjugated them with such great cruelty?

The Ramban provides two different - and even contradictory - answers to this question. Most of the other commentators adopt his approach and offer variations of the same two explanations:

"The reason for the punishment meted out to Amalek, more than any other nation, is because all the nations heard [about the miracle of the splitting of the Red Sea] and were afraid; Peleshet, Edom and Moav, as well as the inhabitants of Canaan, melted with fear of G-d and His glorious strength - and then Amalek came from afar as though to prevail over God. Therefore it is said concerning him, 'and did not fear God.' And also - because he was a great-grandson of Eisav, our relative, who came over to become involved in a fight in which he had no part." (Ramban, Shemot 17:16)

The Ramban's first explanation portrays Amalek as the clear enemy of faith in God. Amalek bears the flag of heresy. At a time when all the nations recognized God's kingship because of what happened at the Red Sea, Amalek found it necessary to demonstrate his ability to wage war against God's nation. In light of this, the fact that the war took place close to Mount Chorev, where God's kingship was supposed to be entirely revealed to all people in the world, becomes especially significant. The Revelation had already begun at Chorev, where water poured forth from the rock, and then Amalek arrived to do battle with Israel. Only after the victory over Amalek did the rest of the Revelation at Sinai take place. The juxtaposition of the war to the Revelation at Sinai, when G-d was revealed to His nation - and was meant to be revealed to the entire world - is explained well by the Ramban.

Many respected commentaries adopted this approach of the Ramban, in different ways. We shall make mention here of the Ba'alei ha-Tosfot, who explain that Amalek waged war against Israel by means of enchantment and astrology - i.e., by unnatural and supernatural means. This insight hints to us that the reasons for the war were likewise not natural - and this would seem to echo Ramban's view of a battle over the roots of faith in God.

Rabbi Tzadok ha-Kohen of Lublin, in his book "Resisei Laila," adopts a different approach. Amalek, to his view, represents principally the power of false imagination that reigns in the world, and the apparent perfection of its strength and logic. Therefore, the essence of the war against him lies in the spiritual realm. This approach, like that of Ramban, understands the crux of the war waged by Amalek as being directed against faith in G-d and His service - and therefore the war against him is a commandment. Many chassidic works follow this view of R. Tzadok, especially Rav Yehuda Aryeh Leib of Gur - the "Sefat Emet."

The Ramban's second explanation does not address a direct confrontation that takes place between Amalek and God; rather, it refers to the hatred of Israel inculcated in him by his ancestor - Eisav - which causes him to come from afar, all the way to Refidim, to fight against Israel. There is considerable support among the commentators for this explanation, too, and it has become widely accepted, especially following the Holocaust. Among contemporary thinkers, Rav Soloveitchik was its staunchest supporter, claiming that those who sow hatred of Israel in the world are the disciples and ideological descendants of Amalek.

The central difficulty presented by both of the Ramban's explanations concerns the historical reality of the period of the Exodus. Would a desert tribe, presumably primitive and absorbed with the concerns of its physical existence, be so self-sacrificing for the sake of waging war over the subject of monotheistic faith? Would a desert tribe preserve its ancestral hatred for Am Yisrael over the course of hundreds of years, despite the fact that in the intervening period - during which Am Yisrael was enslaved in Egypt - there was no conflict between them and Amalek? Would Amalek really take the trouble to come from so far away, motivated solely by anti-Semitism and a desire for revenge?

B. "When you were tired and weak" - why?

The Ramban, whose two explanations are recorded above, explains the episode of Amalek principally on the basis of the narrative in Sefer Shemot; indeed, the quotation above is from his commentary there. But many other commentators (including Abarbanel), in addressing the story of Amalek, take as their starting point the verses in Sefer Devarim. They explain that Amalek's sin lay in the lack of humanity displayed in the confrontation with Am Yisrael, the assumption being that this lack of humanity characterizes Amalek's path in general. This characteristic finds expression not only in the sudden and inexplicable attack on Israel, but - more importantly - in the form of warfare: as a warrior against the weak.

"...when he attacked the weak ones, at the rear, when you were tired and weary" (Devarim 25:18). Two points here require explanation:

1. Why were Benei Yisrael "weak ones" in this war, while in other wars - such as that against Sichon and Og - they displayed great valor? We may explain this phenomenon in terms of the difference that would naturally have been apparent between the generation that left Egypt - accustomed from birth to fear and subjugation - and the next generation, which had grown up free, in the desert. It was the elder generation that fought against Amalek, while the younger generation - which had no part in the sin of the spies - fought against Sichon and Og, Kings of the Emori. However, Yehoshua's victory over Amalek at the end of the

war refutes this distinction - unless we assume that the miracle of the victory was completely disconnected from reality. Still, the tiredness, the weakness, and the weariness would seem to require some explanation.

2. Why is Amalek's cruelty towards the weak mentioned only in Sefer Devarim, not in Sefer Shemot? And why, despite this, does the cry for revenge ring out from Sefer Shemot as well?

We shall attempt, in this section, to answer the first question.

Benei Yisrael passed through three stations on their journey from the Red Sea to Mount Sinai: Mara, the Wilderness of Sin, and Refidim. At Mara they were given a "statute and a judgment," and G-d presented them with a test, whose nature is not presented explicitly in the Torah:

"There He gave them a statute and a judgment, and there He tested them" (Shemot 15:25).

From the context it would seem that the "statute" concerns the fixed ration of water that Moshe established for every Israelite to draw from the well. The purpose of this was so that the water would suffice for everyone, such that there could not arise a situation in which, heaven forbid, those who were stronger and quicker would obtain more water for themselves and their families, leaving the weak languishing in their thirst. This was an educational-social lesson, no less than an existential-physical one.

In the Wilderness of Sin, Benei Yisrael underwent a similar process, which is described more explicitly in the text. Here, too, the food given to them is connected to a test:

"G-d said to Moshe: Behold, I shall rain down food for you from the heavens; the nation shall go out and gather a daily ration each day, in order that I may test them [as to] whether they will walk in My teaching or not." (Shemot 16:4)

The commentaries maintain that the test involved here was Shabbat, concerning which the nation was commanded. But the test is mentioned several verses prior to any mention of Shabbat. It would seem, therefore, that the command and its related test pertain to the portion of food rationed to each person and each family, as we are told further on:

"This is the thing which G-d commanded: Let each man gather of it according to his capacity - an 'omer' per head, by the number of souls; each person shall take for those who are in his tent. And Benei Yisrael did so, and gathered - those who were more, and those who were less. They measured by the 'omer, so that those who were more did not collect too much and those who were few did not collect too little; each person gathered in accordance with his capacity." (ibid. 16-18)

According to what we have said above, the fact that "those who were more did not collect too much" was not a miracle - as Rashi and most of the other commentators assert, but rather a description of how the nation stood up to the test and fulfilled the Divine command. On Friday the nation was permitted to gather a double portion without any explanation being offered; only after they did so are they given the commandment of Shabbat.

The limitation of individual rations to "an 'omer per person' leads to what the Torah ultimately defines as oppression and hunger:

"He oppressed you and made you hunger, and fed you the manna which you had not known, nor had your forefathers known it, in order for you to know that it is not by bread alone that man lives..." (Devarim 8:3).

Here we come to the spiritual-educational aspect of the test: the need to consolidate the anonymous rag-tag crowd that had emerged from bondage into a nation and society that would bear and represent to all the world "the way of God, to perform righteousness and justice" (Bereishit 18:19). A central factor in the consolidation of a nation, currently in the middle of a long journey and about to embark on a difficult war of conquest, is the feeling of mutual responsibility. A sense of equality and responsibility for the lives and well-being of every individual in the nation is important in many spheres of life, but it is of critical importance on the way to receive the Torah, especially among soldiers who will go out together to fight a long, hard war.

* The impression we get from the text is that at Mara, Benei Yisrael stood up to the test, and in the Wilderness of Sin they also behaved properly - with the exception of a few individuals. But the entire socio-educational endeavor that had been carefully built up at Mara and in the Wilderness of Sin collapsed at Refidim, where there was no water for the congregation:

"All of the congregation of Israel traveled from the Wilderness of Sin on their way, by word of God, and they encamped at Refidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. So the people quarreled with Moshe, and they said: Give us water, that we may drink! Moshe said to them: Why are you quarreling with me; why are you trying to test God? But the nation was thirsty for water, and they complained to Moshe, and said: Why have you brought us up from Egypt to put us to death - we and our children and our cattle - with thirst? So Moshe cried out to G-d and said: What shall I do for this nation; just a little more and they will stone me! G-d said to Moshe: Go before the nation and take with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your

hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I shall stand before you there, at the rock at Chorev, and you shall strike the rock, and water will emerge, that the people may drink. So Moshe did so, before the eyes of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place "Masa u-Meriva," because of the quarrel (riv) of Benei Yisrael and their testing (nasotam) of God, saying, Is G-d in our midst or not?" (Shemot 17:1-7)

The collapse of the social structure of Benei Yisrael took place in three areas:

a. The 'masa' (testing of God): The Torah suggests that their sin was the question, "Is G-d in our midst or not?" but this question is not explained in the body of the story. It may be related to their complaint, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to kill us - ourselves, our children and our cattle - with thirst?" Their words expressed further heresy against faith that G-d had brought them out of Egypt, and that He had not done so in order to kill them in the desert, but rather in order ultimately to provide good for them. b. The 'meriva' (quarrel): Their quarrel with Moshe and their explicit demand, "Give us water, that we may drink" - a quarrel that reached a level where there was reason to fear that Moshe would be stoned. c. The sin hinted at in the Torah's unusual expression in presenting the complaint, "To kill us - ourselves, our children and our livestock - with thirst" (literally, "to kill me and my children and my livestock..."). The focus of everyone on himself, his own children, and his own livestock hints that the quarrel was a personal matter for each quarreler; the common complaint was simply an "ad hoc" expansion of it against Moshe. Each person demanded his own personal ration of water for himself, his family and his animals, with no concern for the welfare of the nation as a whole. In Refidim, Benei Yisrael were not given a "statute and a judgment" as they were in Mara, and instead of the expression "there He tested them," pertaining to Mara, we find in Refidim, "for their testing of God." In Refidim, it seems, there was no possibility of there being any water, and so G-d sends Moshe, together with the elders of Israel, to the rock at Chorev, a significant distance from Refidim. It is at this stage that the crisis explodes. Moshe leaves the nation and goes to the rock at Chorev, the elders accompany him, and - as we deduce from the continuation of the text - Yehoshua, too, went along. Since the nation lacked the patience and endurance necessary to walk to Chorev, the Revelation at the rock was witnessed only by Moshe and the elders - not the whole nation. The water flowed from Chorev, apparently via the "stream that came down from the mountain," all the way to the Israelite camp in Refidim - at least a whole day's walk. By the time the water reached the camp it was no longer as clean and clear as it was when it emerged from the rock; in addition, it reached the camp with no accompanying Divine revelation or any other spiritual content. The entire leadership was absent at the moment when the angry, thirsty people saw the water reaching the camp. Even before Moshe had left, each person was concerned only for his own children and his own livestock. The combination of water without any spiritual content, a nation without any leadership, and a thirst with no concern for others - all of these, apparently, formed a terrible mixture that led to a quarrel over water and a war of everyone against everyone else.

And then Amalek came...

C. Back to the house of slavery

Amalek saw before them a nation that was thirsty and tired, with no internal cohesion and with no leadership - in other words, lacking the most basic conditions to defend itself and fight back. All this, in addition to the fact that this nation was a collection of recently-freed slaves, plus they had no experience in warfare. Amalek attacked the rearguard of Benei Yisrael, and this was their sin. The text does not explain why they did this, but the point of this act may be deduced from what happened many hundreds of years later, at Tziklag:

"It was, when David and his men came to Tziklag on the third day, that Amalek had raided the South, and Tziklag, and they had smitten Tziklag and burned it with fire. They had taken the women who were there captive, from young to old, putting none to death; they carried them away and went on their way. So when David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and sons and daughters had been taken captives." (Shemuel I 30:1-3)

In Tziklag, Amalek followed the example of their forefathers and attacked the weak. They were not prepared to confront David and his warriors face to face; rather, they exploited the opportunity offered when David went northward with his men, with the army of Akhish, King of Gat. It never occurred to them that David and his company would be banished by the princes of the Pelishtim, and would return quickly to their city of Tziklag. They went out to wage war only against a non-combatant population, against women and children, against "the weak at the rear."

Because the two stories are so similar, perhaps we may deduce an additional level of understanding of what happened in Refidim from the story of Tziklag. In the story of Tziklag, the text emphasizes that Amalek did not put anyone to death (Shemuel I 30:2); all those who were present in the city were taken captive. It seems,

then, that the captives were taken along as part of the great booty that was captured in the raid, the intention being to sell them on the slave markets for a good profit. They passed, with their captives, over Wadi Besor, from north-east to south-west; we may perhaps assume that they were headed for the great slave market in Egypt. We may further assume that their ancestors had the same aim in mind when they attacked the rear of those who had left Egypt at Refidim, while Moshe, Yehoshua, and the elders of Israel were absent from the camp. Their aim, aside from monetary treasure, may well have been to return the people to Egypt and sell them again into slavery.

This assumption sheds light on a central issue related to the story of Refidim. The juxtaposition of the narratives concerning the people's complaint at Refidim and the arrival of Amalek at the camp is explained by Chazal in the Midrash, as we would expect, in terms of sin and punishment. But the Midrash speaks of a lesson of a very general nature - the removal of God's special providence from the nation that doubted His presence. According to what we have said above, the lesson was clear and unequivocal: the nation quarreled with Moshe, with the words, "Why then have you brought us out of Egypt." This was the strongest language used thus far in any of their complaints. The lesson and punishment came in the form of Amalek, who intended to return them to the slavery of Egypt, thereby reminding the complainers that Egypt was a place not only of plentiful water, but also of cruel taskmasters who struck their backs with sticks, as well as the other pleasures of slavery.

D. Downfall and victory

Let us return to the story of the weaklings. Amalek's second unpardonable crime was their custom - finding expression both in the war against Israel in Refidim and again, hundreds of years later, in Tziklag - of attacking the weak and helpless. Amalek did not present themselves as a fighting force taking on the organized Israelite army; they were not prepared to assume the price of defeat in war. The frontlines that they selected were not on the battlefield, but rather the place of the weak and helpless, the tired and weary.

Here the question arises: this fact, emphasized so clearly in the description of the war in Sefer Devarim, appears nowhere in the story of the war as recounted in Sefer Shemot. Moreover, even the description of the course of the battle, and its results, seems entirely different in the two sources. Sefer Devarim describes acute Israelite distress. The impression that arises from reading the parasha is that Israel was attacked with no response offered; the cry of future revenge is the only response, the only counter-attack. In Sefer Shemot, the tone of the description of the battle is optimistic; there are no great difficulties. Moshe raises his arms, thereby causing Israel to prevail, and when the sun sets, Yehoshua defeats Amalek. The reader reviews the two accounts and wonders whether they are describing the same battle.

Perhaps the discrepancy can be explained by the fact that the battle lasted two days. On the day when Amalek came to Refidim, Moshe sent Yehoshua to recruit men to fight, while he himself expected Divine aid only "tomorrow":

"Moshe said to Yehoshua: Choose men for us, and go out to fight against Amalek. TOMORROW I shall stand at the top of the hill, with God's staff in my hand... and his hands were steady until the setting of the sun." (Shemot 17:9-12)

"His hands were steady until the setting of the sun," then, refers to the second day of the battle - which was the day when Moshe lifted his hands and Israel prevailed. Sefer Shemot describes only the second day - the day that witnessed the counter-attack by Yehoshua and his army, the day that had no "weak ones," only victory. Sefer Devarim, on the other hand, describes the first day of the battle: Am Yisrael with no army, with no leader, with no heroes, at the mercy of Amalek's organized brigades.

The reason for the enormous difference between the first day and the second involves a number of factors:

1. Yehoshua's leadership. Yehoshua, as stated, was with Moshe at Mount Chorev at the time of the Divine revelation over the water. His sprint back to the distant camp in Refidim and the organization of an army from amongst the camp lasted an entire day; during that day Amalek managed to make headway into the camp. Yehoshua's firm leadership stands in stark contrast, throughout the story, to the faltering leadership of Shaul in his war against Amalek, summed up in his own words: "For I feared the people, and I listened to them" (Shemuel I 15:24). 2. Aside from Yehoshua's leadership, what made the second day different from the first was the selection of the fighting men. This was no longer an ad hoc militia, in which each man cared only for his own children and his own livestock; rather, Moshe commanded Yehoshua: "Choose men for us, and go out to fight against Amalek" (Shemot 17:9).

The Torah does not go on to describe which men Yehoshua was instructed to select, but perhaps we may deduce this from what does appear in the text.

Aside from Yehoshua's battle against Amalek, the only other battle in which we read of a selection of men is Gidon's battle against Midyan, Amalek, and the Benei

Kedem, when the latter gathered in the valley of Yizre'el. Gidon is commanded to take the three hundred men who did not kneel to drink, but rather brought water up to their faces with their hands as his soldiers. Aside from the lapse in security that resulted from the men kneeling to drink - which may have been reason enough to invalidate them from serving in Gidon's army, and aside from the suspicion of idolatry that arose from the sight of those who went down on their knees, these people also displayed an unrestrained scrum for the water, and it was this that led them to cast their weapons to the ground. This was highly reminiscent of the scrum over water at Refidim, just before Amalek launched their attack. The three hundred soldiers of Gidon's army knew how to control themselves, to drink water in limited quantities, lapping at it from their hands as a dog laps water - thereby leaving place at the water for the others waiting eagerly for a drink. It is possible that Yehoshua chose similar men for his battle; with soldiers such as these Yehoshua could vanquish Amalek.

3. The third difference between the first day of the battle against Amalek and the second was Moshe's presence at the top of the hill, with God's staff in his hand. In what way is this battle different from all the other wars that Israel fought in the desert; why was there a need for this special action on Moshe's part?

Perhaps the special conditions of this battle at Refidim can be understood better in light of its parallel - the battle at Ai:

"G-d said to Yehoshua: Stretch out the spear that is in your hand towards Ai, for I shall give it into your hand. So Yehoshua stretched out the spear in his hand towards the city... and Yehoshua did not retract his hand that was outstretched with the spear until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai." (Yehoshua 8:18-26)

In the battle of Ai, too, the leader was commanded not to fight himself, but rather to stretch out his arm above the fighters. The similarity between the battle of Ai and the battle against Amalek in Refidim is the setback on the first day, because of the sin. Owing to the severity of the setback, explicit Divine intervention was required on the second day in order to ensure victory. This intervention finds expression in the special act of the leader, as we shall discuss further below.

To clarify this point, let us examine the following midrash of Chazal on Megillat Esther:

"'And tomorrow I shall do as the king has said' - for what reason did Ester say this? Because all of the seed of Amalek fall 'on the morrow.' Thus [Moshe] says, 'Tomorrow I shall stand at the top of the mountain.'"

It seems that the "morrow," which tradition establishes as the day of Amalek's defeat, is related to the difficulty of the war against them, and the natural victory which is expected on the first day of battle. It is only by virtue of the initial blow that is delivered to Israel that they lift their eyes heavenward, thereby meriting God's involvement in His special ways, and hence the victory "on the morrow." This was the pattern established in Refidim, where the nation suffered a severe military blow until Moshe came and lifted his hands heavenward, causing Benei Yisrael to raise their gaze towards their Father in heaven. The same pattern repeated itself in the days of Esther and Mordekhai, when at first the hand of Haman prevailed, until the Jews launched into prayer and fasting. Until the three-day fast was over, Esther did not dare stand up to Haman. "On that night," at the end of the day when she hosted the first party for Achashverosh and Haman, and at the end of the three-day fast, God's intervention in the course of events is revealed for the first time, in the astounding chain of coincidences that bring about the situation in which Haman leads the horse upon which Mordekhai is seated. The next day, Esther embarks on a head-on confrontation with this descendant of Amalek, now armed with clear proof that G-d is on her side.

The battle for Ai was not a war against Amalek, but in one aspect it was similar: this battle, too, was characterized by a setback on the first day, followed by prayer and crying to G-d with a repairing of the sin following the fall, and then another day of battle with a promise of Divine aid - as expressed in Yehoshua's spear stretched heavenward, symbolizing for the nation God's involvement in the battle.

The parallel between Yehoshua's battle at Ai and the battle against Amalek in Refidim, with its common image of the leader stretching his arm heavenward until the battle is over, teaches us what the lifting of Moshe's hands at the top of the mountain was all about. The conventional understanding of this image, based on the Mishna in Massekhet Rosh Ha-shana, is that Moshe lifted his hands in prayer to God, and Benei Yisrael, following his example, then offered prayers. But the parallel to the image of Yehoshua in the battle of Ai would imply that Moshe lifted HIS HAND (not "hands"), grasping the staff of God, just as he lifted his hand and the staff when he waged war against Egypt in the form of the plagues and the splitting of the sea, and just as Yehoshua stretched out his spear. His hand with the staff therefore symbolized, once again, the "strong hand and outstretched arm" of his Sender - of God. Accordingly, we must interpret the Mishna to mean that Benei Yisrael raised their eyes and saw God's strong arm - and then they subjugated their hearts to Him.

We may therefore summarize the third difference between the two days of battle against Amalek as follows: it was only on the second day that G-d was engaged in the battle. Without His contribution to the Israelite cause, Amalek would have prevailed. This difference also explains why Moshe did not run back to the camp, but rather remained at the top of the mountain at Chorev. Bringing together all three elements we may say that it was proper organization of the army, in terms of leadership, along with its internal cohesion based on an ethical code and discipline, together with God's strong arm, that led to victory against Amalek.

E. "The Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelling in that mountain"

We have noted the discrepancy between the description of the battle in Sefer Shemot and the account in Sefer Devarim, and accordingly we drew a distinction between the first day of the battle - the day of the "fall," in Sefer Devarim - and the second day - the day of victory, in Sefer Shemot. This rests upon the assumption, accepted unquestioningly among the commentators, that the verses in Parashat Zakhor (in Sefer Devarim) indeed describe the battle against Amalek at Refidim, even though this is not explicit in the text. This generally accepted interpretation presents a considerable problem - most importantly, in terms of justifying the command of uncompromising revenge against Amalek, as presented in Sefer Devarim:

"It shall be, when the Lord your G-d gives you rest from all your enemies around you in the land which the Lord your G-d gives you as an inheritance, to possess it, you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens; you shall not forget." (Devarim 25:19)

Why are we called to be so steadfast in avenging a battle that lasted only two days, and which concluded in Amalek's defeat?

It is possible that despite the similarity of the two sources in terms of the command to annihilate Amalek in revenge, they actually describe two different battles. Sefer Shemot describes the battle at Refidim, as mentioned there explicitly. Sefer Devarim, on the other hand, describes the battle that followed the sin of the "ma'apilim" (those who, following God's declaration of punishment for the spies and for the entire nation, decided to proceed on their own towards the Promised Land): "They got up early in the morning and went up to the top of the mountain, saying: Behold, we are here, and we shall ascend to the place that G-d said, for we have sinned. But Moshe said: Why, then, are you transgressing God's word? It will not succeed. Do not ascend (for G-d is not in your midst), lest you be struck down before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you will fall by the sword, for you have turned back from following God, and G-d will not be among you. But they persisted in ascending to the top of the mountain, while the Ark of God's Covenant and Moshe did not move from the midst of the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites, who dwelled in that mountain, and struck them and pursued them as far as Chorma." (Bamidbar 14:40-45).

The battle described here is one of defeat. G-d and Moshe were not with the people who went up to the top of the mountain, and what happened there helps us to understand what could have happened at Refidim, had Moshe's hands fallen, heaven forbid. We have no way of knowing how many people went up to the top of the mountain, and how many remained in the camp. The text would seem to support the possibility that it was actually the majority that went up, refusing to accept the terrible verdict of forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Thus God's original decree of punishment, prior to Moshe's prayer - that the entire nation would be smitten - was carried out almost in full, since the "ma'apilim" refused to accept the lighter punishment that G-d settled on in the wake of Moshe's prayer.

The same impression arises from the verses in Sefer Devarim:

"You answered and said to me, 'We have sinned to God; we shall go up and wage war, as all that the Lord our G-d has commanded us.' So each man took up his weapons and set off to ascend the mountain. But G-d said to me, 'Tell them: You shall not go up, nor shall you wage war, for I am not in your midst, in order that you not be smitten before your enemies.' I spoke to you but you did not listen; you rebelled against God's word and went resolutely to ascend the mountain. Then the Emorites, who dwell in that mountain, came towards you, and pursued you as bees do, and smote you in Se'ir as far as Chorma." (Devarim 1:41-44)

The text would seem to indicate that Moshe is referring to the majority of the nation (although this is not necessarily so).

Let us try to describe what happened in the camp at the time.

The spies set off on their mission while Benei Yisrael were encamped at Kadesh Barnea (Devarim 1:20); they returned there at the conclusion of their mission (Bamidbar 13:26). Kadesh Barnea is on the eastern side of the Sinai desert, while the mountains of the Negev loom above it at a thousand meters above sea level and more. The main peaks above Kadesh are Mount Charif, Mount Sagui, Mount Ramon, Arif, Mount Chorsha, and Barnea. Most have a very steep descent westward, towards the Sinai desert. The spies were commanded to ascent towards the Negev. Since the "ma'apilim" did not accept the decree concerning the forty

years of wandering, they ascended to the top of the mountain. The heat must have been intense, in the month of Av (according to the Mishna, Taanit 4:6) in the Sinai Desert. The Amalekites most probably laid in wait for them near the end of their ascent, when the "ma'apilim" were tired and faint from the steep climb in the burning heat, when G-d was not in their midst. And it is perhaps this that the text refers to in the words, "When you were tired and weary, and did not fear God" (Devarim 25:18).

In any event, the Amalekites fully exploited the great weariness of the "ma'apilim," smote them as far as Chorma, pursued them as bees do, and butchered them without mercy. As stated, we have no way of knowing whether the victims numbered in the hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands or perhaps even more.

Moreover, the maimed and anemic camp at Kadesh remained in Kadesh for many more years. From above, with a bird's eye view, the Amalekites observed them, day by day and hour by hour, knowing every movement of Benei Yisrael. They were able to jump out of their hiding place whenever they saw an Israelite boy or girl, or a small, weak group, leaving the camp to perform their bodily needs or to pasture their flocks. They could approach quietly, steal animals, kill children, rape women, and - most importantly - kidnap people for the slave trade in distant places. Following their victory over the "ma'apilim," the Amalekites must clearly have felt far greater confidence, and they made good use of the difference in altitude, the many hiding places in the mountain peaks, and the fact that the Divine Presence was removed from the Israelite camp for the next thirty-eight years. The nation, bereft of the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud in whose shadow they had rested, was left exposed to the wiles of every enemy and attacker, every robber and kidnapper. The Amalekites, in whose shadow Benei Yisrael were now forced to survive, managed to embitter the lives of Benei Yisrael throughout their stay in the desert.

We can now understand the Torah's call for revenge during the fortieth year, when the nation left the nightmare of the desert and its Amalekite neighbors for good. In the second year, Amalek struck the "ma'apilim" as far as Chorma. This was a mortal blow that met with no response. During the next almost forty years, Amalek made the lives of Benei Yisrael miserable in the desert, attacking the weaklings, plundering and enslaving them, until the hiding of the Divine Presence came to an end in the fortieth year. Here, alongside the news, "It will be, when you come to the land..." adjacent to the parasha detailing the declaration to be recited upon bringing one's first fruits to the Temple, and to the parasha describing the covenant to be made between Mount Gerizim and Mount Eival concerning the inheritance of the land, the Torah commands us to engage in a war of annihilation against our bitter enemy. * Let us summarize what we have said thus far concerning the sin of Amalek - a sin which justifies, in the eyes of Torah, the command to annihilate them; we shall then also add one further point.

1. Amalek, a nation of desert nomads with meager land resources, sustained itself primarily by controlling observation points high in the Edomite mountains, the Negev mountains and the "great mountain" in Sinai, over the roads crossing the desert: the "king's highway" east of the Jordan, the way of Mount Se'ir, the Arava road, and the other roads connecting Aram to the Red Sea, Egypt to Eretz Canaan, and perhaps even the roads in the Arabian Peninsula. They exploited this control for the purposes of plundering isolated caravans on the lengthy roads and kidnapping free people to sell at the slave markets in Egypt and elsewhere. People who left their homes and their families to make a living never returned. Respected merchants became slaves in foreign lands until they died. The Torah abhors slavery, as expressed in the commandment that contradicts all the laws of a world where slavery is tolerated: "You shall not hand over a slave to his master if he has fled to you from his master. He shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place that he chooses in one of your gates where it pleases him; you shall not oppress him." (Devarim 23:16-17)

The Torah's severely negative attitude towards slavery in general, and kidnapping for this purpose in particular (a sin punishable by death), arises from two sources. One relates to the inter-personal sphere, with its roots in the Torah's attitude towards the story of Yosef and his brothers. The second relates to the relationship between man and God, and specifically to the kidnapping of Jews to sell as slaves: "For they are My servants, whom I brought forth from the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as bondsmen." (Vayikra 25:42)

There is no greater contradiction to the message of the Exodus, and the related commandment, "I am the Lord your God..." than the kidnapping of a Jew for sale as a slave. In the case of Amalek, who kidnapped for nationalistic reasons rather than for personal reasons, this is all the more abhorrent. It was in this sense that Amalek tried to "prevail over God." Until their defeat at Refidim, the Exodus was not yet complete; until their ultimate, final defeat in the future - so long as the slave markets flourish from the sale of by-passers in distress, and so long as Israel is in danger of being enslaved once again in the Egyptian house of bondage or elsewhere - God's Name is not complete, nor is His Throne complete.

2. In Refidim, in Tziklag, in the Canaanite Negev, in the Yerachme'elite Negev and elsewhere, Amalek avoided face-to-face combat with armed, trained soldiers. They preferred not to assume the risk and the price of declaring war openly, but rather to attack unprotected, weak populations not trained to fight back. Humanity, for the most part, has recognized that even war has rules and limitations, for without them the world cannot exist for any length of time. Even in prison, among criminals and people with twisted minds, even in the midst of bitter battles for survival, there are recognized, accepted rules. The hidden recesses of the collective human conscience have given rise to the rules of reward and punishment, gratitude for good and revenge for evil, a distinction between loyalty and treachery, and the limitations on harming the defenseless. These values are found even among primitive societies, and even in corrupt ones. They have found expression in limited ways, in sometimes terribly distorted understandings, but nevertheless, they have become part of the collective human consciousness and are accepted today as international law, which draws a distinction between cruel and relentless soldiers, on one hand, and war criminals, on the other - the latter acting with no limitations and no moral rules whatsoever.

The strategy of attacking the rear, the weak, weary and thirsty, the policy of attacking defenseless towns such as Tziklag, empty of its fighting men - this was not the accepted style of warfare. It was a war crime. It was the style of Amalek.

The two points that we have raised here concerning the nature of Amalek's warfare and the nature of their occupation and sustenance, give rise to a question as to the Torah's commandment for all generations to annihilate Amalek: Is the Torah's command based upon the idea of revenge and repayment towards a nation that sinned against us in the desert, hence relating to Amalek's actual biological descendants, or does it continue to be based upon Amalek's sin, thus relating to Amalek's ideological disciples in future generations? These disciples may be actual descendants of Amalek, but not necessarily so. It seems possible, at least theoretically, that Amalek's biological descendants would mend their ways, while others - who are not biological descendants - would continue in that evil path, such that the obligation to annihilate them would apply.

3. Neither the savage butchery by Amalek of the "ma'apilim," whose numbers - once again - we shall never know, nor the possibility that the Amalekites made the lives of Benei Yisrael miserable throughout the many years of their stay at Kadesh Barnea, necessarily bears the distinctive stamp of Amalek. They therefore have no additional human aspect beyond what we have already said, but they certainly justify profound hostility between Israel (representing God) and Amalek, and an equally profound desire for revenge. To this consideration we must add the existential threat that Amalek presented to Israel from the south, from the southwest and from the east. All of these come together to explain the Torah's command to wipe out the memory of Amalek from beneath the heavens.

Translated by Kaeren Fish

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