

## Remember what Amalek did to you. (25:17)

It is a positive command to blot out the memory of Amalek *mitachas ha'Shomayim*, from beneath the Heavens. On a purely cursory level, one would be hard-pressed to explain what it was about the war with Amalek that earned him and his descendants the ignominious title of archenemy of the Jews. It is not as if Amalek drowned Jewish babies (as did the Egyptians), bathed in their blood, and subjected our entire nation to captivity and persecution for over two centuries. He attacked us as we commenced our journey to *Eretz Yisrael*. Definitely not a good thing, but does it warrant that his name be eternally blotted out? Furthermore, as the *Netziv*, *zl*, asks, we are enjoined to “remember” to blot out his name. By “remembering” to blot out his name, we are actually defeating the purpose. Would it not be better to simply “forget” Amalek – period? Ostensibly, it is not enough to blot him out; it is necessary that we maintain a serious hatred towards him and what he represents.

**Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl**, explains that apparently the battle against Amalek is not merely a battle of nations; rather, it is a battle of values, of light against darkness, of purity against defilement, of good against evil. Amalek is the standard bearer for the forces of impurity and evil in the world. His archenemy is *Klal Yisrael* who represent the power of *kedushah*, sanctity. The *Rosh Yeshivah* observes that Amalek is more than a nation. Amalek symbolizes every false ideology and philosophy whose goal is to undermine the power of *kedushah*, to profane our sacred identity, to breach the separation between light and darkness, sacred and profound, pure and defiled. Thus, we are enjoined to remember what Amalek symbolizes and what he sought to do to us. This act of remembrance will generate within us an *animus* to everything that Amalek represents. This is how we blot out his name.

The war between Amalek and the Jewish People is historic, heralding back to Rivkah *Imeinu's* womb, where her twins Yaakov and Eisav fought over the future. *Yalkut Shemoni* relates that, prior to his death, Eisav *harasha*, the evil Eisav, told his heir apparent, his grandson Amalek, “I did not succeed in vanquishing Yaakov. It is now up to you.” The baton was passed from grandfather to grandson, and so it has been passed throughout the generations from one evil despot to the next.

It was not always Amalek in the guise of Eisav. At times, Amalek spewed his venom against Torah and Orthodoxy through other channels, represented by the various “isms” and schools of progressive, secular thought, bent upon reforming Judaism, stripping it of its traditions and divorcing its people from its Torah and, ultimately, from Hashem. We are still battling them, as they change guises, at times even presenting themselves as friends who want to help “modernize” our lives. *Deios kozvos*, false ideologies, are the product of Amalakean guile, fueled by Eisuvian animus toward the descendants of Yaakov *Avinu*. If we keep this in mind and remember the source of these ideologies, then it will be much easier to blot them out.

The chasm between our value system and that of Amalek is extreme. The *Rosh Yeshivah* quotes the *Maharal's* commentary to *Megillas Esther* (*Or Chadash*), who explains that Haman's war

against *Klal Yisrael* was purely an act of virulent hatred. He had no material or physical gain whatsoever. *Maharal* proves this from Mordechai's response to Hasach (when he questioned him at Esther's request concerning his wearing sackcloth).

*Vayageid lo Mordechai es kol asher karahu*, "And Mordechai told him of all that had happened to him" (*Esther* 4:7). The word *karahu* is related to the word *mikreh*, happening, implying an event that occurred by chance, an incident without purpose or reason. Mordechai was intimating that his refusal to bow to Haman was not meant to humiliate Haman. He just did not genuflect to pagans. Haman took umbrage simply because of hatred. The *Midrash* adds that Mordechai said, "The grandson of *Karahu* (referring to Amalek who was *karcha ba'derech*) chanced upon the Jewish nation as they travelled along their way, not bothering anyone. Everything that Amalek does is not for personal benefit, but out of hatred.

*Maharal* distinguishes between *mikreh*, incidental, whereby there is no gain from an endeavor, and *etzem*, essential, where there is purpose and meaning to one's actions. When one acts for personal benefit, to carry out a goal, a mission, from which he will gain, it is not an act of *mikreh* – even if his intentions are far from noble. It is not an extraneous act. It is part of his intrinsic nature. Even if one were to steal for profit, it is *etzem* – not *mikreh*.

When one acts only to spite, to hurt, out of deep-rooted hatred, it is *mikreh*, an incidental act which is purposeless, a mission without a reasonable goal, an act of spite which does nothing but destroy. Amalek symbolizes the belief that everything in life is chance, incidental, *mikreh*.

*Etenna*/eternity is an anathema to him. *Techiyas Ha'Meisim*, the resurrection of the dead, is to him the very antithesis of his belief. Nothing is eternal; nothing has value; everything is temporary. This was the perspective on life of his grandfather, Eisav. He rejected the *bechorah*, birthright of the firstborn, because "I am not going to die, there is no tomorrow; thus, there is no value to today. Everything and everyone dies. Life is all a waste. Live for the moment! Enjoy the 'now.' Forget about the future."

This is why Eisav despised Yaakov. Our Patriarch understood the meaning of *nitzchiyus*, eternity. To him nothing was *mikreh*. Everything in life has purpose and value. Nothing is incidental or coincidence. We now understand why Amalek, his descendants – both natural and ideological – hate us more so than any other nation. We are the antithesis of their belief. Our very being is proof positive of Amalek's delusional beliefs. We have been hounded and persecuted, even before we became a nation. Amalek is gone, albeit his ideology is alive, well and thriving in the minds of his descendants.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* adds that *Klal Yisrael* is *etzem*. We are eternal, thus we each have a portion in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come. Under specific circumstances, when a Jew acts in an extremely nefarious manner, he will lose his portion. The gentile who has a portion in *Olam Habba* must act in such a manner which earns him the appellation *chasidei umos ha'olam*, righteous among gentiles. Amalek, however, is eternally excluded from ever joining this august group. His name is to be

blotted out. He is a *mikreh* and, thus, the antithesis of what *Olam Habba* represents. He is our greatest enemy because his very essence stands in contradistinction to us.