

Then Aharon died there on Har Hahar... The Canaanite (King)... heard that (Klal) Yisrael had come... And he warred against Yisrael. (20:28, 21:1)

Rarely do we find a *mitzvah* in the Torah in which we are told not only to execute a certain deed, but never to forget that we are enjoined in this *mitzvah*. These *mitzvos* are *zechiros mitzvos* in which there is a specific duty to remember a specific occurrence. This act of perpetuating the occurrence will spur us to carry out a specific *mitzvah* or not to do a prohibited activity. For instance, we are enjoined to remember what Hashem did to Miriam *HaNeviah*, and how she was publicly censured for speaking ill of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Although it was not actual slander, her questioning Moshe's behavior *vis-à-vis* his wife was deemed inappropriate for an individual of her exemplary spiritual standing. As a result, we are admonished against the evils of *lashon hara*, slanderous speech.

Another example which truthfully has always bothered me is the *mitzvah* of remembering what our archenemy, Amalek, did to us when we left Egypt. We are to remember to blot out his name. Nowhere do we find a *mitzvah* to remember to destroy our enemy. Why is Amalek tied in with remembering? Concerning other *mitzvos* – we are either told to do or not to do, but never to remember to do. It is almost as if remembering is a critical component of the *mitzvah*.

Then I came across a beautiful homily by *Horav Yehonasan Eibshitz, zl*, which may be applied to illuminate this question. The Torah teaches that, when the Canaanites heard that Aharon *HaKohen* had died and that the protective barrier of the *Ananei Ha'Kavod*, Pillars of Cloud, had suddenly disappeared, the pagans felt it was a good time to engage the Jews in battle. *Rashi* informs us that actually it was not the Canaanites who attacked, but Amalek-- speaking the language of Canaan. They dressed up like Amalek, fought like Amalek, but spoke like Canaan. One wonders why, after being bitterly defeated once, Amalek would return for a second portion of defeat. Apparently, it was the disappearance of the *Ananei Ha'Kavod* that gave them hope. Why? Furthermore, why did they speak the Canaanite language?

Rav Yehonasan explains that, during the time spent in the Wilderness under the protection of the *Ananei Ha'Kavod*, the Jewish People did not perform the "*mitzvah*" of *Bris Milah*, circumcision, because the Pillars of Cloud prevented the *Ruach Tzefonis*, North Wind, from blowing. The wind is necessary for the healing process, and without it, performing *Bris Milah* places the *nimol*, recipient of the circumcision, in mortal danger. Now that the *Ananei Ha'Kavod* were no longer here, the North Wind was free to blow. This meant that the Jewish People could now safely be circumcised. Amalek was waiting for this moment. He remembered only too well how Shimon and Levi, two young teenagers, were able to destroy a whole city while the men were recuperating from their circumcisions.

Amalek had not forgotten what Yaakov *Avinu* had done to his grandfather, Eisav. The grandson

was a credit to his evil grandfather, and he was going to avenge his honor. Amalek would not forgive Yaakov for taking the *brachos* under what they felt was surreptitious methods. Yaakov was instructed by his mother, Rivkah *Imeinu*, to don Eisav's clothes and even mimic his voice, so that he would receive the blessings which were rightfully his. As with all nations/families, the ensuing generations did not necessarily maintain the same passion for the fight as did its original founders. Amalek feared that the inexplicable hatred he bore against the Jewish People would wane with time. To raise the passion for the war against the Jews, Amalek had his warriors act as Yaakov did: wear the clothes of Amalek, but speak like the Canaanim; act surreptitiously; act deviously. It is not that our Patriarch acted in this manner, rather this idea was what Amalek inculcated in his people from the very beginning, so as to increase their hatred of the Jews. This "method" of early childhood education has succeeded quite well in the Moslem communities, where anti-Semitism has become a critical part of their religion.

Having said this, let us digest the character of Amalek's vilification of the Jew. He did not just hate – he perpetuated this hatred, by infusing the collective minds of his nation with a hatred of Yaakov. They were raised with the "bedtime" stories of Yaakov stealing their *Zeidy* Eisav's blessing. Memory was a critical part of their upbringing. Therefore, when Hashem instructed Moshe that the Jewish People should "remember" what Amalek did to us and to expunge his name from beneath the Heavens, it was for good reason. It is not enough to merely destroy Amalek because of his attack against our nation. We must make him atone for nefarious use of the gift of memory. He **remembered** to hate; he infused his people with hate by causing them to remember an event which he knew would provoke them negatively. As he employed memory to destroy us, we will also remember to eradicate Amalek. Thus, memory is a vital component of the *mitzvah*, since it comes as *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure, to punish Amalek for his sin against Hashem and His People.