

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

What did Amalek really do to us? They came after us three times: in Refidim; the Maapilim, after the spies; following the death of Aharon *HaKohen*. There were casualties, and every Jewish soul whose life is cut short is worth all of our enemy – and more. Nonetheless, we have been persecuted and hounded, murdered like animals led to the slaughter; from the Egyptians who persecuted us for 210 years, who slaughtered our babies, to Titus, Nevuchadnetzer, Crusades, Inquisition, hundreds of pogroms, Chemelniki, and finally the cataclysmic Holocaust, which destroyed one third of our nation – yet we are not enjoined to remember for posterity what they did to us. Amalek, however, we must remember – never forget what he did. What is it about Amalek that earns him the ignominious title of archenemy of the Jewish People – enemy of Hashem?

*Horav Elchanan Sorotzkin, zl*, posits that Amalek's actions against our People are not to be viewed as some historical occurrence. When we are told to remember Amalek, it is not for us to think about Amalek of the past, but rather, Amalek of the present. The war against Amalek continues to rage to this very day. This is why we should not forget, because, when we forget, we fall prey to him. We are enjoined to take no prisoners in this war. Amalek is evil incarnate, an evil that is infectious, an evil that will eat away at us until it destroys us. By remembering what he did, we acknowledge his evil; thus, we are on the lookout in order to be prepared for an attack.

In other words, Amalek is not simply a nation. He represents a concept, an enemy that can conceal himself behind various facades. He could even be someone whom we know, whom we would never suspect would act in an evil manner towards us. That is Amalek. He is always preparing for war against us. Amalek does not have any other enemies – only Jews. Why? Because we are Hashem's chosen People. We are His agents in this world. Actually, Amalek wants to battle Hashem, but since he cannot, he takes out his animus on us – Hashem's children.

How do we see this from his actions? What did he do that indicated his unparalleled evil, his unmitigated hatred for Hashem's People? I think the answer lies in his approach to war. Every nation that goes into battle wants to win. It certainly does not want to lose. Amalek, however, does not care. He just wants to hurt us. He is neither affected by loss, nor does he expect to destroy our People. He simply wants to weaken us, to destroy our pride, our power, our dignity. He is not interested in land, nor does he need to rack up large numbers of casualties. He knows that he will not emerge victorious, but he also knows that we will be weakened by his assault. That makes it all worthwhile. This is the definition of evil incarnate. Not someone who is out to win, to destroy, but someone who battles out of hatred, who just wants to inflict pain and weaken the enemy. By destroying Jewish resolve and undermining our faith in Hashem, he impugns our national esteem.

Amalek's hatred of Judaism is irrational – or so it seems. There is a reason, but I am sure that Amalek realizes that he has been chosen to be the whip of anti-Semitism, the representative of *Eisav sonei l'Yaakov*; Eisav hates Yaakov. Eisav requires no excuse, no license to hate Yaakov. Surrendering to Eisav will not make him decrease his animus. It will certainly lower his opinion of

us and diminish our own self-esteem. The only way Yaakov/Jews can battle Eisav – and triumph – is by maintaining their Jewish pride, which can only be derived by adhering to Torah and *mitzvos*. All of the conferences and interfaith forums will only belittle us in their eyes and fuel the fires of hatred which they harbor anyway.

A very telling anecdote underscores this idea. It was 1940, during World War II Berlin. Jews were not the most favorite people. Whenever a Jew was compelled to walk outside, he knew that his life was in mortal danger. An elderly Jew needed to go out. Soon he was surrounded by a group of Nazi ruffians. “All right, Jew boy,” they said, “who started the war?”

The Jew was frightened. He knew quite well that the wrong answer would send him to the hospital – or worse. He was, however, not a fool. “The Jews,” he screamed, “and the motorcyclists.”

The ruffians could not understand his reply. “Why the motorcyclists?” they asked. “Why the Jews?” he countered.

Amalek’s hatred is irrational, nonsensical and unwarranted. Perhaps, deep down in his messed-up psyche, he realized that he was the product of the union between Timna, a pagan who was not accepted for conversion by the Patriarchs, and Elifaz, the son of Eisav. Furthermore, Elifaz did not marry her, she was his concubine. Apparently, growing up with such ignominious lineage can damage a person’s ability to be rational.