



Partners In Torah

San Diego-Los Angeles-Ventura

Take home Dvar Torah

תשפ"ה Parshat Zachor

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Hello, Welcome!

Partners In Torah is a community-wide, independent and inclusive adult education program focusing on understanding Jewish relevancy to our lives by studying text most interesting to each participant.

Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour each week, friendships are forged between mentors and mentees.

Partners in Torah has proven to be effective at reclaiming the rich legacy of wisdom, inspiration, and guidance for many who have, until now, lacked access.

Thank you for joining us!

Please encourage friends to join you in participating so that we may grow together as a community.

Parshat Zachor תשפ"ה

The month of Adar has begun, and we are commanded to increase our happiness! The Talmud says (Taanit 29a):

אמר רב יהודה בריה דרב שמואל בר שילת משמיה דרב : משנכנס אדר
מרבין בשמחה

Rabbi Yehuda the son of Rav Shmuel the son of Shilas said in the name of Rav, "When the month of Adar enters, we increase our happiness."

Rashi explains that because Adar was a month of miracles for the Jewish people, *i.e.*, Purim and Pesach, and this holy energy refreshes itself every year, we should be more joyous during this time.

As soon as Adar enters, we already have our thoughts on the festive holiday of Purim. This coming Shabbat, the Shabbat just prior to Purim, is called Shabbat Zachor, the *Shabbat of Remembrance*, on which we fulfill our biblical obligation to remember Amalek's battle and attempt to destroy us as we left Egypt. We fulfill this mitzva by taking out and reading three verses from a second sefer Torah (Deuteronomy 25:17--19):

(יז) זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֵק בְּדַרְךָ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם :
(יח) אֲשֶׁר קָרָךְ בְּדַרְךָ וַיִּזְנֹב בְּךָ כָּל הַנְּחָשִׁים אֲחֵרֶיךָ וְאַתָּה עָנִיף וַיִּגַע וְלֹא
יָרָא אֱלֹקִים :

(17) Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you were leaving Egypt. (18) That he happened upon you on the way, and he struck those of you who were hindmost, all the weaklings

at your rear, when you were faint and exhausted, and he did not fear G-d.

The Torah then instructs us not to forget what Amalek did. We are also required to erase their memory from the world. This obligation requires us to kill every descendent of Amalek. (More on this later.)

These two commandments, to remember and not to forget, comprise the Torah's 603rd and 605th commandments. #604 is the mitzva to annihilate them.

Why is Amalek marked for such a harsh punishment? Many other nations sought to destroy the Jewish nation as they made their way to the Land of Israel yet the Torah did not command us to utterly wipe them out. So, what was so grievous about Amalek's attack that prompted the Merciful One to mandate their annihilation?

The interaction between the Jewish nation and the Amalek people began shortly after the Jews left Egypt, when Amalek attacked them for no apparent reason.

Generally, five reasons support a country going to war: (1) To defend its land from an approaching threat, (2) To conquer new territory, (3) To show off its might, (4) To defend itself if a nation started up with it, and (5) To wage a holy war. But, as the above verses show, none of these could have been the reason for Amalek to attack the Israelites.

Specifically, (1) We were on our way to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, not looking to fight with anyone; (2) We had just left Egypt and had no land, so Amalek could not have attacked to acquire new territories; (3) Amalek attacked the weak stragglers trailing the Jewish people, hardly a way to show off one's might; (4) We did not start up with them, or have any previous history with them to justify a defensive war; and (5) They were not fearful of G-d, so it wasn't a holy war.

So, why, then, did they attack us?

Amalek had in his genes a deep-seated hatred for Hashem and His people, inherited from his ignoble grandfather, Esav. Amalek was Esav's distilled, evil essence, and was more evil even than he. With this lineage, Amalek is the enemy of G-d. Having no belief in holiness, Amalek's *raison d'etre* was to destroy the holy Jewish people and to rid the world of any holiness whatsoever. Amalek alleged that it was all a hoax of one nation trying to hold itself higher and better than all the others. Hence, Amalek's motive in warring with the Jewish people was to tear down the aura of holiness that surrounded us. Amalek wanted to disprove Hashem's existence and show that it was all a hoax; a demonstration of Moshe's magical powers.

The Sages derive this conclusion from verse 18, which provides that Amalek "*happened upon us.*" The word that means this is קרך from the word קרי, which means a *coincidence*. They did not accept that Hashem involves Himself with mankind, and especially the Jewish people. All the miracles in Egypt, and even the sea splitting just when the Jewish people needed to cross, were all

lucky coincidences. Amalek maintained that there is no such thing as Divine intervention by Hashem!

The word קר in Hebrew also means cold. This brings out a second nuance of what Amalek did to us. They made us cold, or, more accurately, cooled us off. Before Amalek's attack, the surrounding nations who heard of the Jewish people's miraculous exodus from Egypt and Hashem's might were petrified of the Jews and would never have attempted to start up with them. Amalek's attack "cooled" us down, giving others the courage to jump on the bandwagon. Rashi asks us to imagine a tub filled with water so hot that nobody can enter. One person jumps in saying, "I know that I'll get burned, but at least I'll cool it off for the others." Amalek's hatred of Hashem and the Jewish people and its desire to destroy us made it worth it for him to suffer.

Amalek's goal was to extinguish the wave of fear that had gripped all the other countries in the region. The Torah tells us that as a result of the miracles that Hashem did for the Jewish people, the surrounding nations were shaking in their boots. The sheer might and control of the world that Hashem had displayed through the plagues and the sea's splitting struck awe in the hearts of all who heard about it. Amalek wanted to show that, indeed, it is possible to war with them. Amalek was so evil that even though it knew that it would get burned and suffer loss of life, at least it would eliminate the Jews' apparent invincibility and open the door for the other nations to battle with them.

This is why it is a mitzvah to eradicate Amalek. They are the essence of evil, while Hashem is the essence of good and we, as His

nation, are His ambassadors for good in this world. We personify, through keeping the Torah and its mitzvot, what is good and proper in the world. To honor Hashem and His holy Name, it is appropriate to rid the world of its most evil agent, Amalek, who is trying to erase any belief in Hashem from the world. Amalek as well did irreparable damage to the Jewish nation by cooling them off in the eyes of the surrounding nations, paving the way for them to attack.

The story of Purim took place in the year 363 BCE, towards the end of the 70-year exile between the First and Second Temples. Darius, Ester's son from Achashverosh, granted permission to rebuild it.



At that time, prophets were still common among the Jewish people, and both Mordechai and Esther were prophets. They

wrote the Megillah with prophetic vision, and, thus, every detail and nuance is significant. Because Achashverosh would read it, through the way that they worded the language, they hid many facts in the text. This is why the Sages dwell on every word and extract many facts and interesting tidbits hidden in the text. One of them concerns the anomaly in the way Haman's ten sons who were hanged are written in the Megillah, which has perplexed the Sages for centuries.

Here is how Mordechai and Esther wrote the listing, by name, of Haman's ten sons who were hanged, and, therefore, this is how every Megillah needs to be written.

ואת	א"ש
ואת	פרשנדתא
ואת	דלפון
ואת	אספתא
ואת	פורתא
ואת	אדליא
ואת	ארידתא
ואת	פרמשתא
ואת	אריס
ואת	ארידו
עשרת	איתא

In addition to the unusual columned format, four of the letters are sized differently than the others: (1) the **ת** of the name פרשנדתא, (2) the **ש** of פרמשתא, (3) the **ז** of ויזתא, which are smaller than the rest, and (4) the **ו** of ויזתא, which is enlarged.

What could be behind these unusual letters? Based on recent Jewish history, the following explanation has been offered.

Haman, the Megillah's villain, descends from Agag, king of Amalek when King Saul ruled as Israel's first king. The history of the Jewish nation and the people of Amalek began just after the Jews left Egypt, when Amalek attacked them for no apparent reason.

The Talmud (Tractate Megillah 6a) tells us of a prayer that Yaakov our forefather submitted to Hashem. It was a prayer that Amalek, Esav's descendant, be unsuccessful in his attempt to take over the world. Yaakov's prayer is recorded in Psalm 140:9:

(ט) אֵל תִּתֵּן יְדֹד מְאֹיֵי רָשָׁע זְמָמוֹ אֵל תִּפְקֵךְ יְרוֹמוֹ סָלָה :

*9) Hashem please do not grant the aspirations of **the evil one**, his designs do not permit, and may they be removed forever.*

The Talmud then records:

ואמר רבי יצחק מאי דכתיב אל תתן ה' מאויי רשע זממו אל תפק ירמו סלה אמר יעקב לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבנו של עולם אל תתן לעשו הרשע תאות לבו זממו אל תפק זו גרממיה של אדום שאלמלי הן יוצאין מחריבין כל העולם כולו

*Rabbi Yitzchak said: That which it says in the verse – (the one quoted above) Yaakov prayed to the Almighty, “Master of the Universe, do not grant the aspirations of **the evil one**, this refers to **Germany** the descendant of Edom, for if they succeed, they will destroy the entire world.”*

Rashi identifies the evil one referred to here as Amalek.

In essence Rabbi Yitzchak in this Talmudic passage is telling us that the Germans (Nazis) were descendants of Amalek. In a prophetic vision, Yaakov our Forefather saw that, in the future,

Amalek would have a descendant who would attempt to conquer the world. Yaakov submitted a heartfelt prayer to Hashem not to let him succeed and to remove his aspirations from the world.

But how do we know that we talking about the same Germany? The Talmud immediately resolves this question for us. The Talmud continues to say,

ואמר רבי חמא בר חנינא תלת מאה קטירי תגא איכא בגרממא
של אדום

*And Rabbi Chama the son of Chanina said, "There are **three hundred** crown toting princes in this country Germany of Edom (just mentioned)."*

The following quote is from the scholarly work *"The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich," W. L. Shirer, p.121*

*By the end of the middle-ages, which had seen Britain and France emerge as unified nations, Germany, remained a crazy patchwork of some **three hundred individual states** (one crown toting prince per state).*

The Sages' prophetic statements, made over 1,500 years ago, clearly connect Germany to Amalek and provide us with a new insight to the events of the Holocaust. First, it reveals the source of the deep hatred inside these evil people and how they were able, without qualms, to commit the atrocities that they did.

Second, we see that this effort was a continuation of their goal in this world - to erase Hashem from the world by

eradicating every single Jew from the face of the earth. They would finally accomplish the mission at which Haman failed.

Hitler (שׂוֹרֵר) stated:

"The war for world domination will be fought entirely between us - the Germans and the Jews. All else is façade and illusion..."

"The Jews have inflicted two wounds on mankind - circumcision on its body and conscience on its soul. These are Jewish inventions..."

"It is true we are barbarians. It is an honorable title... I free humanity from the shackles of the soul, from the degrading suffering caused by the false vision called conscience and morality..."

Excerpts from H. Rauschning *The Voice of Destruction*

This is the essence of the epic battle between Esav and Yaakov: are we here for this world, or for the next? Hitler says we, the Germans, are the superior race, cultured and polite, yet we are barbarians and proud to be so. We have the perfect balance and know how to live life to its fullest in this world. Yaakov says it's not about this world at all. This world is only a passageway to the world to come.

Perhaps, this sheds some light on why the Nazis tried so hard to dehumanize their victims in the camps. They wanted to show that under difficult conditions, even the Jews would break down. In fact, they proved just the opposite. The nobility of the Jewish

soul shone forth in full glory. The heroism of the truly holy Jewish people in the camps is the subject of countless stories throughout those horrific years that continue to inspire us to strive for their greatness.

As we saw in the example of the boiling hot bathtub, Amalek hates Hashem and the Jewish people so much that it is worth it for him to suffer to destroy us

This held true for Hitler as well.

Towards the end of WW II, when the Allied forces were closing in on Hitler, he continued using the Wehrmacht's trains and precious fuel to send Jews to the death camps instead of using those vital resources to win the war.

On August 8, 1945, the charter of the International Military Tribunal (IMT) was announced. The International Military Tribunal comprised judges from the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, and it indicted and placed on trial leading Nazi officials. The trials were held in the Nuremberg Palace of Justice, Nuremberg, Germany.

On October 6, 1946, 11 Nazi war criminals were sentenced to death by hanging, for war crimes that they had committed. The executions took place on October 16, 1946. Let's look at that date on the Jewish calendar.

<< October 1946 >> <small>change view: [event list calendar grid] [month entire year]</small>						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4 9th of Tishrei, 5707 Erev Yom Kippur	5 10th of Tishrei, 5707 Yom Kippur
6	7	8	9 11th of Tishrei, 5707 Erev Sukkot	10 12th of Tishrei, 5707 Sukkot I	11 16th of Tishrei, 5707 Sukkot II	12 17th of Tishrei, 5707 Sukkot III (CH'M)
13 18th of Tishrei, 5707 Sukkot IV (CH'M)	14 19th of Tishrei, 5707 Sukkot V (CH'M)	15 20th of Tishrei, 5707 Sukkot VI (CH'M)	16 21st of Tishrei, 5707 Sukkot VII (Hoshana Raba)	17 22nd of Tishrei, 5707 Shmini Atzeret	18 23rd of Tishrei, 5707 Simchat Torah	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 30th of Tishrei, 5707 Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan	26 1st of Cheshvan, 5707 Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan

It falls out on the 21st of Tishrei, Hoshana Rabba, **5707**. Let's look more closely at that year. How would we write that year in the format that we use for the Hebrew date? We are now in the year 5785, which we write as תשפ"ה. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet also has a numeric value, called its Gematria. The numeric value of ת is 400, ש is 300, פ is 80, and ה is 5, for a total of 785. The millennium we are in is understood since we know we are in the 6th millenium, hence the 5 is not part of the date. How would we write the year **5707**? Well the 5 is understood, so we will just write the **707**. ת - 400, + ש - 300 + ז -7. Do these letters look familiar to you? These are the three small letters that we saw in the names of Haman's ten sons. What about the large ז? Its numeric value is 6. The enlarged ז indicates the 6th Millennium. The hanging of the 10 Nazi war criminals, the grandsons of Haman, in the year **5707**, was hinted to in the Megillah, thousands of years ago!

This answers another perplexing question in the Megillah's text. In the paragraph following the list of the Haman's hanged sons, it says:

And the king said to Esther, In Shushan the capital, the Jews have killed and destroyed 500 men, and the ten sons of Haman have been hanged. What now is your request, and it shall be done?

Esther replied: *“If it pleases The King, let it be given that **tomorrow also** the Jews of Shushan can do as they did today, and the ten sons of Haman **will be hanged on the tree.**”* And The King said, *“Let it be done.”*

Why is Esther speaking in the future tense? Weren't they already hanged?

Megillat Esther, the Book of Esther, is one of the holy books that comprise the written Torah, the Tanach. Yet it is quite unusual in that it does not contain Hashem's name written in it even once. This plays well with the theme of Purim, that although there were no open miracles, Hashem's fingerprints, so to speak, are all over it. (More about this next week.) Our Sages teach us that Hashem is referred to secretly in the Megillah many times, and that is in the capacity of “The King.” Whenever the Megillah says king, without the identifying word “the” in front of it, it is referring to Achashverosh, the human king. When it writes, “THE king, is the reference is to “THE ultimate king,” the King of all Kings, Hashem.

Using this information, let's substitute *Hashem* for “*the king*” in the difficult passages above. “The King” – Hashem, asked Esther what else she would like? Esther responded by requesting of “The King” that in the future, tomorrow – far in the future - Hashem also hang Haman's ten sons, the *ten* Nazi war criminals, the descendants of Haman the Amaleki. To this Hashem said, *“Let it be done!”*

One more thing. A blow by blow account of the Nazi executions was written by Kingsbury Smith of the International News Service. He was chosen by lot to represent the American press at the executions. This is his discription of the last of the Nazi war criminals to be executed, Julius Streicher.

Guards then started moving Streicher up the steps. As he mounted the platform, the beady-eyed Jew-hater called out:

“And now it goes to God.”

Streicher was swung around to face the audience in front of him. He glared at the Allied officers and the eight Allied correspondents representing the world’s press who were lined up against a wall behind small tables directly facing the gallows.

With burning hatred in his eyes, Streicher looked down at the witnesses and shouted:

“Purim fest 1946.”