

פִּיגְמָה

PARSHAS ZACHOR AND THE FIGHT AGAINST THE EVIL OF AMALEK

לזכות
כל נכדינו שיחיו
שיגדלו לתורה לחופה ולמעשים טובים
לנח"ר כ"ק אדמו"ר

נדפס ע"י
הרה"ת ר' יצחק מאיר וזוגתו מרת לאה
שיחיו
שפאלטר



TO THE

END

Reb Hillel Paritcher, one of the great Chassidim of the Mittlerer Rebbe, related the story of how he came to be a Chossid... thanks to Amalek.

The story goes as follows:

It happened one Shabbos Parshas Zachor that an unknown traveler came to Reb Hillel's town and stayed there for Shabbos.

On Shabbos day, during the *kriah* of Parshas Zachor, Reb Hillel took a look at the guest and saw from the expression on the man's face that he harbored a truly intense animosity towards Amalek.

After *krias haTorah*, Reb Hillel approached the stranger and asked him: "Reb Yid, I have a question for you: What has Amalek done to you that you hate them so intensely?"

The stranger he was talking to was Reb Zalman Zezmer, a Chossid of the Alter Rebbe.

Reb Zalman replied:

"You want to know? Come with me to my Rebbe..."¹

AMALEK AS AN EXTERNAL FORCE

In describing the actions of Amalek in their original attack on the *b'nei Yisroel*, the *possuk* says:

"ויזנב בך כל הנחשלים אחריו"

"He cut off the stragglers at your rear."

Rashi explains the meaning of this to be that Amalek cut off "those who were lacking in strength because of their misdeeds, for the ענן (i.e the *ananei hakavod*) had rejected them."

From here we see that Amalek really only posed a threat to sinners, who were cast out from the protection of the *ananei hakavod*.

It was for the sake of these same Yidden, that *all* of *b'nei Yisroel* left the protection of the *ananei hakavod* in order to wage war against Amalek. As it says in Parshas Beshalach:

"צא להלחם עם עמלק"—Go out to war with Amalek." There, Rashi explains: "go out" meaning "from the *anan*."

This teaches us that it is the obligation of every single Yid to go "outside of the *ananei hakavod*" in order to reach a Yid found on the outside the world of Yiddishkeit, exposed to all sorts of "Amalekim," and bring that Yid close to the Torah.²

KLIPAS AMALEK WITHIN THE PERSON

The *possuk* describes the encounter with Amalek with the word 'קרך', literally meaning 'they met you.' However, it also has a similarity to the term 'קרירות' ("coldness" or apathy), hinting at another aspect of Amalek's impact.

As the Frieddiker Rebbe explains:³

"The cold apathy of Amalek, 'who "cooled" your derech,' for they cool off the derech Hashem. They cool off spiritual matters so that a Jew's heart remains unaffected by Elokus.

And the place that is impacted by the cold apathy of Amalek is the derech Hashem—because when a person has a desire to break free of the limitations of this world, Amalek comes along and coldly diffuses it.

"The way that the *kelipa* of Amalek takes effect is through planting doubt, by saying: 'Who says this is really so?' He will say this, even though he is well aware that 'it is really so,' and that it indeed is a real spiritual and G-dly thing that was witnessed.

"Amalek is the same gematria as 'safek,' for he places doubt in all matters of ruchnius and Elokus.

"For instance [he will say]: 'Why should I be so surprised and affected by the fact that Hashem can bring a miracle? I know that He's great!'

"And that cools off one's hispaalus, so his avodah is cold, and he can chas v'shalom go downhill."

In a *maamar* delivered on Shabbos morning of Parshas Zachor 5718* in his room, the Rebbe spelled out a list of progressive steps taken by the *kelipa* of Amalek to stop a person from being excited in their avodah.⁴

“The *kelipa* of Amalek causes an apathy that leaves a person unexcited by all things they encounter. That is to say, even when he is shown something incredible from above, something that is a clear expression of Elokus down here in this world, still, Amalek will diffuse [the person’s excitement] and deny the supernatural occurrence, saying it didn’t happen.

“When he cannot deny the *nes* entirely, he then gets clever, cooling off the person’s passions by saying: ‘There’s nothing incredible about this. After all, since this is something that was done by Hashem Himself—and Hashem can do anything—then really it isn’t a wonder at all. If that’s the case, why be affected by this?’

“If the wonder of the miracle is so tangible and real that he can’t even cool off the excitement in the aforementioned way, then he will forcibly cool off all passion by making an internal decision that, no matter what, the wonder of this *nes* will not affect any feelings of excitement within him.

“Even if he is forced to admit that this wonder of Hashem is indeed causing him to feel great *hispa’alus*, he will just cool it off by deciding and resolving that he will not allow these emotions to cause him to change how he acts, and he certainly won’t allow them to change who he is.

“This is what the *kelipa* of Amalek is.

“Although he knows his Master, i.e. he understands and appreciates G-dliness, nevertheless, he wrestles with it and intentionally rebels against it through promoting this apathy and coldness.”

A STIFF-NECKED BATTLE

While the idea of *b’nei Yisroel* being called an “*Am k’shei oref*”—a stiff-necked, or stubborn people—is well known, there is a side to this quality that is expressed in *kelipa*, by the nation of Amalek.

This is hinted at in the name of Amalek, which references the term ‘*melikah*,’ the method for slaughtering certain birds in the *Beis Hamikdash*, done at the neck.

As the Tzemach Tzedek explains:⁵

“Amalek is a composite of the words “*am-malek*.” *Melikah* is done at the neck.

To explain: The special quality of the Jewish people is ‘for he is a stiff-necked people.’ It was for this reason that Moshe asked of Hashem ‘*vesalachta*,’ because the Yidden are from the level of ‘*oref d’kedusha*’ (the neck of holiness), i.e. they have the ability take control over the desires of their hearts, both with the destruction of their worldly desires and by conquering them. They are able to stand up against any obstacle with conviction and strength.

“This ability is called ‘*oref*,’ because the neck is what connects and links the brain in the head to the rest of the body and extends its instructions throughout. Thus, it is through the neck that the ability to redirect and change the heart of man comes about.

“The corresponding level is the state of Amalek, the ‘stiff neck’ of *kelipa*. That means, that even if his heart appreciates how things should be with regard to his *avodas Hashem*, still, not only will this not be enough to convince his heart to be swayed towards *ahavas Hashem*, he will even manage to accomplish the exact opposite.”

WHY WE REMEMBER

We understand that Amalek poses a threat and that we have a mitzvah to destroy them. But where does zechirah, remembering their act, play a role in the destruction of Amalek?

The answer is, that remembering and knowing what Amalek does, doesn't only empower us to wipe them out, it itself is part of the act of their eradication.

The idea of this “zechirah” is that one remembers and recognizes how evil the wickedness of Amalek is. One should be deeply concerned about the fact that such a terrible scenario can even exist, that a person can remain unmoved by the light of Hashem, and on the contrary, stand opposed to His divine light, making sure that it is not able to produce any inspiration or excitement at all.

This concern, the fact that one worries and lets out a sigh about this, breaks and destroys the *kelipa* of Amalek. How do we make this really happen?

The solution: ‘*Bitush*.’ One gives himself a verbal thrashing, in a loud and booming voice. This is because Amalek is compared to a dog. How does one discipline a dog? With a stick. And just like when dealing with a person who is egotistically brash and inappropriately bold, the way to address Amalek’s conduct is to put him to shame with every possible form of humiliation. This will be his downfall.

Although such a person is inherently inferior and is already well aware of his own inferiority, with all of his self-promotion being the epitome of shamelessness and *chutzpah*, still, we see time and again that when a loud voice yells at him and shames him, he falls from this egotistical state. This is done specifically without engaging with him reasonably, for if instead we were to say to him: “How could you act so disrespectfully to such a great person?” it would be of no help. Only angrily putting him in his place will fix him.

This is why ‘zechirah’ is so important. It is through constant concern over the evil threat that Amalek poses that the eradication of *kelipas Amalek* and its total destruction is accomplished.⁶

UNTIL HE IS GONE

The *possuk* says, “First among the nations, Amalek,” and then, the rest of the nations will be refined. But when it comes to Amalek itself, “his end is not until he is destroyed.” This is because Amalek has no fix, unlike the general seven *middos* that have good in them to be extracted [much like the seven nations of the promised land, who do not need to be totally wiped out].

The *kelipa* of Amalek is not in it for his own enjoyment, it is only there to spite *Elokus*. Therefore, it has no redeeming qualities, and “his end is not until he is destroyed”—for breaking it by driving it away is its only *takana*, and this is the point of erasing Amalek.⁷

JUST DO IT

There’s a famous vort that the Rebbe quoted a few times:

זְכוֹר (צִירָה) זְכוֹר (סְגוּל), אֲבִי גוֹט.
“אֶפְמֵקֶן”

The saying humorously references the minhag of repeating the word ‘זְכוֹר’ in order to comply with all opinions of its proper pronunciation. Loosely translated, the message of it is:

He can be remembered with a tzeireh (zeicher), or a segol (zecher). Just make sure he is erased good and well.

(Fifth night of Chanukah 5730, et. al.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND REASON

We've already seen how the attitude of Amalek is one of chutzpah, one that defies all logic and one that cannot be reasoned with. They won't even allow a person to be impacted by gilui Elokus.

One method of dealing with them is what we've already discussed above—that of zechirah. But there is something else we can use to combat them and its precedent was set at the very first attack of Amalek, in Refidim.

The Mittlerer Rebbe explains:

“This was the reason why Amalek's war took place in Refidim, right after they had witnessed the wonders and miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim.

“Their attack on *b'nei Yisroel* stemmed from the very height of hatred that they harbored for them, and it was the highest degree of *chutzpah*, beyond all logic and reason.

“Opposing them with *kedushah* that expresses *Elokus* would not fix this. The only thing that can oppose this is the state of *bittul*, becoming ‘*ayin*’ (total nothingness). This happens through attaining the level of ‘*ahavah rabbah*,’ an intense love for Hashem that is completely above and beyond the state of reason. This is *emunah*, the core of the opposition to the *kelipa* of Amalek.

“This is why when Moshe raised his hands—high above his head, representing the idea of going higher than *da'as*—the Yidden would overpower Amalek, and, when he'd put his hands down—going lower than *da'as*—Amalek would gain in strength. Because Amalek, at the root of it all, comes into existence through baseless self promotion and hatred.”⁸ **T**

THE REMEDY OF MEMORY

“On the way, as you were leaving Mitzrayim.”

When we are inspired to break free of our physical and spiritual limitations, Amalek comes along and attempts to intervene. The solution to the *kelipa* of Amalek is “*zachor*,” to etch words of Torah into our memory, to think about them and envision them at every time and in every place.

(Sefer Hamaamarim Kuntreisim vol. 2, p. 570)

1. Likkutei Sippurim (Perlow) p. 296.
2. Shabbos Parshas Beshalach 5741.
3. Maamar Zachor, Sefer Hamaamarim Kuntreisim vol. 2.
4. Maamar Zachor 5718.

5. Torah Ohr, Tetzaveh 85b.
6. Maamar Zachor 5665, ch. 8.
7. Maamar Vayomer Moshe El Yehoshua, 5685.
8. Shaar HaEmunah (Mitteler Rebbe), ch. 14