



THE HARRY H. BEREN TORAH WEEKLY

A project of the Denver Community Kollel



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

Vayikra 5776

March 18, 2016

A Taste of Torah Stop the Violence and Kill the Enemy!

By Rabbi Ari Aragon

“Death to an Entire Nation!” “Whole Culture Wiped Out Due to Religious Hatred!” “Religious War Causes Death of Thousands Of Men, Women, Children, and Animals!” These are headlines that every extremist and anti-Semite wishes they could see in the paper. Naturally, we are disgusted by these ideas. However, it is these very headlines that we, as Jews, long for every moment of our lives.

In this week’s *maftir* (final section of the Torah reading) we will read *Parshas Zachor*, the Portion of Remembering. What are we remembering? The Torah tells us (Devarim 25:17-19) that it’s a mitzvah to remember that when the Jewish People left Egypt, a people named Amalek came and attacked them. They went so far as to kill the weak first, knowing they wouldn’t survive long enough to finish off the rest of the Jews. It was complete, unadulterated hatred of the Jews. The parsha finishes off saying that there is a mitzvah to completely obliterate any remembrance of Amalek from the face of the Earth. Rashi adds that this includes all men, women, children, and even animals. Even more so, the grammatical construct of the word *zachor* (remember) means that we should remember now as well as every moment - forever - that we must live with a constant consciousness of what Amalek did to us. Why is the Torah so concerned about the decimation of Amalek?

To answer, we will need to digress to a seemingly separate concept. The Midrash Tanchuma (Naso 16) says that when Hashem created the world, He desired to have a dwelling place in the physical world, as He has in the spiritual world. What this means, on a very basic level, is that Hashem desires that His unity be revealed throughout every corner on this physical world, just as He is in the spiritual world. We similarly describe this ultimate goal three times a day during the recitation of the *Aleinu* prayer that concludes the three daily prayers: “On that day [the End of Days] Hashem will be one and His name will be one.”

How is this revelation accomplished? Our Sages tell us an amazing thing (Chullin 91b): “Before the angels are able to utter Hashem’s name, they need to first proclaim, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy (referring to His holiness that is in the Heavens, His holiness that is on the Earth, and His holiness that is eternal).’ In contrast, we only have to say two words, ‘*Shema Yisrael* (Listen, Israel)’ before uttering His name.”

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (1914-2005) explains

this to mean that there are two ways to prepare to say Hashem’s name in the world, either by recognizing Him with the expression of the angels, or by the Jewish People simply “listening” to what it means to be a member of “Yisrael,” the Jewish Nation. Thus, the basic definition of what a Yisrael is parallels the complete expression of the angels: the ultimate revelation of Hashem’s name, throughout all reality, for all eternity. Just like we say during the *mincha* prayer on Shabbos, “You are one, and Your name is one, and who is like Yisrael, a singular nation on the Earth!” When Yisrael is one, united in its connection with Hashem, then Hashem is one in the world. Our very essence is the revelation of Hashem in this world.

Amalek, on the other hand, is a very different story. The Torah, when describing Amalek, says that they are a people who don’t fear Hashem (Devarim *ibid.*). Their actions against the Jews in the desert illustrate this point. They knew about the miracles that were done for the Jews and the incredible destruction of the world’s most powerful civilization, and still, as Rashi says, that didn’t prevent them from attacking. What kind of crazy people are we talking about?! How could someone in their right mind overlook all the extraordinary and outright miracles done for the Jews as they left Egypt, and really believe that Hashem wouldn’t protect them? I believe the Torah hints at the answer. The Torah describes our encounter with Amalek as, “Remember... that he [Amalek] happened upon you...” What is the reason for using the strange language of “happening?” Amalek came with premeditated intent to kill; he didn’t merely “happen” upon us!

The answer opens our eyes to the essence of Amalek. The entire philosophy of Amalek is that everything in this world “just happens” without any direction from a Director. Evolution? Just happened. Creation? Just happened. Splitting of the Sea? Just happened. To whatever extent Amalek and its philosophy are in this world, the unity and truth of Hashem simply cannot be revealed.

I once had an argument with an atheist over whether or not Hitler was evil. “Of course he is!” I exclaimed. “Look at what he did!” To which my opponent responded, “Yes, but to HIM, he saw himself as doing the world a favor! He was just trying to be good and help, just like you and me!” At first I was disgusted

Continued on back side

Stories For The Soul

An Important Interruption

based on a story on revach.net

Rabbi Tzvi Chanoch Levin of Berdin was the son-in-law of the famed Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter; 1847-1905). He was renowned for his diligence in Torah, his toil for the sake of the community, and most of all, for his unconditional love for every Jew.

Once, when he was the head of the rabbinical court of Berdin, he held an important meeting at his home for all the rabbis in the area. In the course of the meeting, a stranger appeared at the door. Rabbi Tzvi Chanoch greeted him in his usual warm fashion, and inquired whether he was hungry. When the man replied in the affirmative, Rabbi Tzvi Chanoch excused himself from the meeting and asked his wife to prepare a meal for the guest. While his wife was busy preparing, Rabbi Tzvi Chanoch himself set the table. He then sat at the table with the guest while he ate and conversed with him. Finally, the guest went on his way.

Rabbi Tzvi Chanoch was about to return to the rabbis who had been waiting for him all this time, when his wife turned to him with a question. “Who was that visitor? He must have been an important man if you kept all those important rabbis waiting because of him.” Rabbi Tzvi Chanoch replied, “Just a fellow Jew. I’ve never met him before.”

Although we do not have a Temple in which to offer sacrifices, our Sages teach us that one’s table is akin to an altar, and when one provides food for the poor, it is like bringing a sacrifice. Just as one would present an offering to G-d with honor and respect, one ought to help those less-fortunate in the same fashion.

Kollel Happenings

RABBANIT MIZRACHI MARCH 20TH

The Women's Division of the Denver Community Kollel and Aish Denver present a video for women, Zayin Adar and Purim. Sunday, March 20th at 8 pm at Aish Denver.

Rabbanit Yemima is one of the most in-demand speakers today, attracting hundreds of women to her lectures, where she presents deep messages with a sense of humor.

Lecture sponsored by the Salehrabi family for the aliyat haneshama of Ilana Bat Rachamim who recently passed away.

No charge, suggested donation of \$5 to help cover costs of future video presentations.

DEVELOPING TALENTS AT NEXT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Charlie Miller, Co-Curator of Off-Center at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore the responsibility of utilizing one's talents. April 6th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

RAV SCHWAB ON CHUMASH AVAILABLE FROM KOLLELra

The Denver Community Kollel is offering the book *Rav Schwab on Chumash* for sale to the community. The book is available through the Denver Community Kollel at a special discount rate of \$24.

To order, call 303-820-2855, email info@denverkollel.org, or go to www.denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: On Purim, many congregations insert a liturgical series into the chazzan's repetition of *shacharis*. These are known as *Krovetz*, and are inserted into every blessing except the 15th blessing, *Es Tzemach Dovid*. Why is that blessing the exception?

A: As we are told in the Gemara (Brachos 28b), the *Amida* (or *Shemone Esrei*, lit., eighteen) originally contained eighteen blessings. When an additional blessing (now the 12th) was added, two customs developed. In some communities, the *Amida* became nineteen blessings. This is our current custom. Other

communities, however, merged the 14th and 15th blessings into one (due to the similarity of their contents), keeping the total number at eighteen. As Rabbi Elazar Hakalir (the author of the *Krovetz*) followed the latter custom, he only composed one stanza for these two aforementioned blessings. (Source: Tosafos Rid Ta'anis 13b)

This week's question: Which one of the Shabbos *haftarahs* is specifically mentioned in the Gemara, an exception to the general rule?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org.

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel – the Rosh, Part V

The Rosh had eight sons, many of whom were prominent Torah scholars and Torah leaders in their own right. His three most famous sons are Rabbi Yaakov, Rabbi Yechiel and Rabbi Yehuda. There is some question as to whether Rabbi Yaakov or Rabbi Yehuda succeeded the Rosh in his position as Rabbi of Toledo.

Rabbi Yaakov wrote a work known as the *Arba'ah Turim*, or Four Rows. The work is a compendium of Jewish law, and it is divided into four sections: *Orach Chaim*, which deals with the laws of prayer and the synagogue, Sabbath and the holidays; *Yoreh De'ah*, which

deals with many laws of Jewish ritual, such as *shechita*, *kashrus*, and moneylending; *Even Ha'ezer*, which deals with the laws of marriage and divorce; and *Choshen Mishpat*, which deals with jurisprudence. Rabbi Yaakov quotes his brother Rabbi Yechiel a number of times, and his brother Rabbi Yehuda once. His father, the Rosh, is quoted throughout the work.

The *Arba'ah Turim*, or as it became known, the *Tur*, was the basis of the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law). Rabbi Yosef Karo, author of the *Shulchan Aruch*, used the framework established by the *Tur* for his classic work.

A Taste of Torah

Continued from front side

by the discussion, but I realized later that we were both right. I'm right because I believe there is an objective good and truth dictated and demanded by G-d. He is "right" because he thinks that man evolved from more primitive life forms, and since it "just happened," true good is quite subjective. A person with such a philosophy on life prevents the revelation of Hashem in the world, and it needs to be completely uprooted. For Amalek, whose very being is to deny Divine providence, the only option is to remove its very being from the world. Amalek's purpose is to deny Divine influence in the world – the antithesis of the essence of the Jewish People. Our entire purpose is to reveal Hashem, while Amalek's essence prevents that revelation. That is why they are so opposed to our existence, and why the Torah demands that we dedicate ourselves to their ultimate destruction.

The attempted destruction of the Jews by Haman (a descendant of Amalek) on Purim was partially

driven, as the Book of Esther describes, because the Jews were, according to Haman, an *am mefuzar u'meforad* – a dispersed, disunified, detached people. After the miracle that saved the Jews, the rectification of this problem was to provide money to the poor and give *mishloach manos* (gifts of food) to fellow Jews – unity. Why is the unity of the Jewish People so important that Amalek can say about us, "United you stand, divided you fall?"

As discussed earlier, our mission of revealing the one unified G-d is through being one unified people. If we lack unity, we can do all the mitzvos and still not accomplish our ultimate goal of revealing Hashem. The word *tzibur* (public) is an acronym for *tzaddik* (righteous person), *beinoni* (average person), *rasha* (wicked person) – to teach us that only when the righteous, average, and wicked of the Jewish People are united are we then called Yisroel, thereby opening the gates for Hashem to enter into the world.

The Torah Weekly is made possible through a generous grant from the Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, in memory of Harry H. Beren, z"l.

Denver Community Kollel: 1516 Xavier Street, Denver, CO 80204 Tel: 303-820-2855 Fax: 303-820-2806

Email: info@denverkollel.org Web: www.denverkollel.org

To receive Torah Weekly by email, send an email to torah-subscribe@denverkollel.org