

## Remember and Never Forget! - Parshat Zachor

Contributed by Tzvi Fishman  
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Shabbat Zachor is upon us, when we have the obligation to remember what Amalek did to us when we departed from Mitzrayim.

"Remember what Amalek did to you by the way, when you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you by the way and smote the hindmost of you, all that were feeble in your rear, when you were faint and weary, and he feared not G-d (Devarim, 25:17).

Just what is it that we are supposed to remember?

Usually, during their Shabbat Zachor sermons, the rabbis explain Rashi's third understanding of the verse. Rashi writes that the Hebrew for "how he met you by the way" - "karcha baderech" - comes from the word "kar" meaning cold. Thus in attacking Israel, Amalek showed the nations of the world that, notwithstanding all of the miracles in Egypt, the Jewish People were not invincible, just as when a scoundrel jumps into a scalding bathtub, even though he gets burnt, he cools it off for others to follow after him.

This is all well and good, but it ignores the explanations of Rashi which precede it. Rashi's first explanation is that "karcha" derives from the Hebrew word, "mikre," meaning happenstance. In other words, Amalek attacked the Jews just for the sake of attacking, for seemingly no real reason, since the Jews were not threatening to conquer Amalek's land.

It is the second explanation of Rashi that we will analyze here in depth, because within it lies the key to understanding the inner, spiritual danger we face today in our present war against Amalek. The strategy of Amalek, in the past, and once again today, is to destroy the Jewish People by luring us into sexual transgression, G-d forbid.

Rashi says that "karcha" should be understood as ker, meaning seminal pollution. Rashi explains that Amalek lured the Jews into homosexual transgression, then cut off their "milot," the sign of their circumcision, and threw them up to the sky, as if to say, "This is what's left of Your holy nation." Rashi concludes that the protective Clouds of Glory spit out these Jews who were feeble because of their sexual sins. These were the Jews whom Amalek killed.

The "Baal HaTurim" commentary says that the word "karcha" has the same gematria (numerical equivalent) as saris, meaning "castrated." Furthermore, the words, "vayizanev bicha," meaning, "and smote the hindmost of you," has the gematria of "zeh milah," meaning, "this is the place of circumcision." The "Baal HaTurim" adds that the Hebrew for "all that were feeble in your rear," has the gematria of "this was the tribe of Dan."

What does all of this mean?

The "Sfat Emet" explains that Amalek's principal goal in going to war against Israel was to banish sexual purity from the world, represented by the brit milah. This is why they cast the sign of the circumcision into the air. The brit milah is considered the seal of G-d, stamping the Jewish People with the Name of G-d. The nation of Amalek represents the spirit of evil in the world, the impure orlah, the husk that prevents the light of G-d from entering the world. This explains why the Name of G-d cannot be fully revealed in the world until Amalek is obliterated. By fighting against the sexual purity of Israel, Amalek damages the Brit, returning the orlah to its place, and causing G-d's Name to depart from the world ("Sfat Emet," Parshat Zachor, Year 5664).

In the language of the Kabbalah the word "derech" is associated with the sefirah of the Yesod (Arizal, "Likutei Torah," Toldot, Ch.3). As we have mentioned on many occasions, the Yesod parallels the Brit in man, the spiritual channel that brings Divine blessing into the world. The word "derech" is also an aphorism for sexual relations. "Karcha baderech" thus means damaging the Yesod through sexual transgression.

This was Amalek's plan.

But as long as Israel guarded the Brit, the Clouds of Glory, also derived from the Yesod, guarded over them hermetically. Were Israel to lose its Divine protection, it could be defeated in war. The holiness of the Israeli camp, exemplified by its sexual purity, is the key to its defense, as it says, "For the L-rd thy G-d walks in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thy enemies from before thee, therefore shall thy camp be holy, that He see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee" (Devarim, 23:15). When the Clouds of Glory cast out the unchaste of Israel, Amalek was waiting to fulfill its evil design.

The Zohar asks, "What is the reason that the war that Amalek waged against Israel was singled out for remembering by the Holy One Blessed Be He, more than all the wars that all other nations waged against Israel? The Zohar answers that Amalek waged both a physical war against Israel and a spiritual war, in order to defile Israel's sexual purity and thus alienate them from G-d" (Zohar, Shemot 194b).

The Zohar continues:

"How do we know this? Because it is written, 'how he met you by the way.' The meaning of karcha can be understood from its alternate form mikre, as in the verse, 'If there be among you any man that is not pure by reason of impurity that chances (mikre) by night' (Devarim, 23:11) Amalek set against you the evil serpent on high in order to defile you on all sides. And if Moshe had not waged a mighty spiritual battle on high, and Yehoshua a mighty war down below, Israel would not have been able to overcome him. It is for this reason that the Holy One Blessed Be He insisted on preserving the memory of this hatred from generation to generation. What is the reason? Because Amalek strove to uproot the sign of the Brit (Israel's sexual purity) from its place" (Ibid).

Accordingly, Moshe chose Yehoshua, who came from the descendents of Yosef, the upholder of the Brit, who conquered

his sexual passion, to wage war against Amalek. Thus Yehoshua, the embodiment of the holy Brit, was chosen to fight against Amalek, the embodiment of the impure orlah. Interestingly, the gematria of "milchamah b'Amalek" (war against Amalek) equals "Yosef HaTzaddik."

The Zohar relates how Bilaam also would enter a defiled state of keri in order to cast his polluted curses on Israel (loc. cited). It was also Bilaam who advised Balak to send the daughters of Moav to whore with the Children of Israel, in order to estrange them from G-d, and thus pave the way for their slaughter, may Heaven always protect us. Bilaam understood that the G-d of the Jewish People hates licentiousness more than anything else. The Zohar teaches that Bilaam and Balak were rooted in Amalek, whose spelling is contained in letters of their names (Zohar, Bereshit 25a). In adopting the strategy of Amalek, they succeeded in bringing about the death of 24,000 Jews. It was Pinchas who saved the day, upholding the Brit by killing Zimri and preventing him from leading the nation into further sexual transgression.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov teaches that in being "reishit goyim Amalek," the leader of the peoples, Amalek encompasses both Yishmael and Esav. Amalek embodies the impurity of the primordial serpent, who brought about the downfall of Adam and Eve by wiling them into sexual lust and transgression (pagam habrit). Ever since then, the task of mankind has been to rectify this sin, through tikun habrit. All of life depends on this ("Likutei Halachot," Purim, 3).

With the successive failures of the generations which followed after Adam, the mantle fell upon the Jewish People. Leaving Egypt, we held up the banner of the Brit, the emblem of sexual purity. With the arrival of the Nation of Israel on the center stage of history, it was going to be a new and brighter world, stripped of the darkening orlah. But the minute we let down our guard, and our faith in G-d, Amalek, the primordial serpent, attacked, returning the world to darkness. The wicked Amalek, and his descendants, have no tikun. Thus, in order to perfect the world, Amalek must be destroyed.

The holy Sage and Kabbalist, Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen of Lublin, explains the evils of Amalek in several of his works. He explains that Amalek and Esav dominate in the world when Israel falls from its Divine stature through sexual transgression ("Resisae Lilah," 23:1). When this occurs, holiness recedes from the world, and mankind is shrouded by an outer covering of evil. This is because holiness can only be found in a place that is detached from sexual sin, and this can only be found in Israel. This holiness is symbolized by the brit milah, which is considered the seal of G-d, stamped precisely on the sexual organ.

Rabbi Tzaddok explains that ever since the sin of Adam, mankind was infested with lust. The brit milah was given to the Nation of Israel as a tikun, to rectify the world from its fallen state. Sexuality for the Jewish People was to be a commandment in the service of G-d, sanctifying the act and the holy offspring who would derive from it. This sexual holiness was what Amalek was seeking to erase from the world when they came and tempted the weak and erring Jews. Therefore, when they castrated their victims, they threw their milot skyward, and called out to Heaven, "Take that which You chose for Yourself." As if to say that the Jews were no different than the other nations in their submission to animal passions and lust.

For Amalek could not tolerate that there could be a nation, Israel, that sanctified the sexual act. They could not tolerate the idea that G-d had a part in this too (Ibid, 48:17-20). "Thus the verse says, 'karcha baderech,' meaning that they caused the Jews to spill semen in an unholy way. For when the sexual act is not performed in its intended holy fashion as a mitzvah, but rather after the lustful inclination, which is called evil, this is considered 'mikre,' spilling semen in vain." And there is nothing which causes the Divine Presence to flee from the world more than the spilling of semen in vain, which is the ultimate evil. And this was Amalek's goal, to remove the Presence of G-d from the world, so that mankind could be free to wallow in its lusts and evil inclination (Rabbi Tzaddok, "Takanat Hashavin," 10:13).

Rabbi Tzaddok explains that we read the portion of remembering Amalek before Purim on Shabbat Zachor in order to awaken Israel's sanctity in regards to the Brit, because when this sanctity rises, then the impurity of Amalek falls, paving the way for his destruction on Purim ("Yisrael Kiddoshim," 8:27).

Today, the spirit of Amalek in the world is still trying to uproot the sign of the Brit from Israel by exporting all of its immoral culture and pornography to the Holy Land. Throughout the Diaspora, the spirit of Amalek is working overtime to lure the Jews into the grave sexual transgression of assimilation. Like their fathers before them, these modern day sons of Amalek and Bilaam are hoping that this pollution will sever our connection with G-d, leaving us vulnerable prey to their ever-evil designs of destroying our holy nation, and thus eradicating the Presence of G-d in the world, may the Almighty foil their plans.

This is what we have to remember, and guard against, and fight with education and counseling, in order to repel this plague of spiritual pollution from our borders, from our streets, and from our homes, via television, Internet, and the like. This is what our rabbis must teach from this Torah portion in order to alert the nation of this insipid and poisonous threat that undermines the very foundation of our existence - the Covenant of sexual purity that G-d established with our forefather Avraham and with his offspring after him, to be a holy nation in the Holy Land. It is by sanctifying our lives that we blot out the memory of Amalek, and in so doing, the L-rd G-d of Israel shall be One, and His Name shall be One - King over all of the earth.