

Harav Chaim Malinowitz

Due to the vagaries of newspaper deadlines (even at a weekly paper), the words you are presently reading are being written with dichotomous emotions. On the one hand, I have to stay focused on the fact that the reader will be reading this when heavily into the Purim spirit, perhaps on Purim itself (don't laugh — anything is possible after a couple of *ad d'lo yoda's*, even reading *Chadash!*). Yet they are also being written on a day of great tragedy, sorrow, and anguish. I speak of the horrific murders of five members of the Fogel family of Itamar this past Leil Shabbos, with the funerals taking place on Sunday.

From Arabs I expect nothing less. This is who they are, and what they are. But for a “rabbi” to stand up and state (according to newspaper reports) *during his eulogy* of those slaughtered, the moronic statement that, “Hashem will take *nekama*, not people” *only a few days before we read Parshas Zachor, about the mitzvah of totally destroying Amalek*, is depressing beyond words. And a week before a Yom Tov in whose *megillah* it says that the Jews utterly destroyed, killed, and slew their enemies (Esther 9:5) who *wanted* to do them harm... and that the Jews of Shushan asked for an extra day in order to kill more of them, and hung Haman's sons up high for all to see (Esther 9:13)! Does this “rabbi” have in his *megillah* the words that mine does — that the fear of the Jews and the fear of Mordechai fell upon the Jews' enemies (Esther 9:2, 3)? Who is afraid of whom in Eretz Yisroel, *rachamana litzlan*?! Why anything remains standing in the Arab village of Avratta (from where the murderers came) is a mystery to me. And if anyone reading this is shocked by my words, I would expect at least an embarrassed silence during the week of reading “You shall utterly destroy any vestige of Amalek,” with the mitzvah to read this *parshah* being seen as the cause to inculcate our readiness and eagerness to strike back and destroy those who would destroy us. It is fascinating for me to see how most people read the word “vestige” twice (*zeicher*; *zecher*) to make sure they capture every possible nuance in the reading,

yet recoil at the thought of actually doing anything of the sort! And do people listen to the *haftarah* of Parshas Zachor? Do they know that we had to undergo the near-destruction of the Jewish people on Purim *because* of Shaul Hamelech's misplaced pity, his unwillingness to "take revenge"? And "revenge" for an attack which had occurred many hundreds of years before!

Are you and I helpless to do anything, dear reader (as another eminent "rabbi" said there, according to reports I've read)? Well, maybe we are personally helpless, but are we collectively demanding that there be some reaction on the part of those who have the capabilities to act, or are we just shedding tears and mouthing pieties? Do we see the need, the imperative, the *chillul Hashem* we are engendering if we do not demand that those who can, take action? And to talk, six days before Parshas Zachor and Purim, about how Jews do not take *nekamah* can only be described as "Purim Torah," which should have waited until next Sunday.

But let there be no mistake. The *reason* that we are to eradicate Amalek, the *reason* that we look forward to his destruction, the *reason* that we celebrate it, is that it is nothing less than the eradication of... evil! Amalek's — and the Arabs' — gripe, is ultimately with Hashem, or to be more specific, the G-d of the Jews. Amalek is, after all, the most acute and fanatical of the children of Esav (see Rambam Sefer Hamitzvos *aseh* # 188: to destroy Amalek, *from among the descendants of Esav*), the Esav who never quite got over Yaakov's taking of the brachos, and the *bechorah*. And the Arabs, of course, base their "claim" to Eretz Yisroel on their perspective that it is Yishmael, not Yitzchak, who is the carrier of the torch of Avraham Avinu.

This is why, alone amongst all other mitzvos in the Torah, we find an eerily similar phrase obligating Bnei Yisroel to destroy Amalek (*machoh timcheh es zeicher Amalek*) and Hashem's promise that He would do so (*ki mahchoh emcheh es zeicher Amalek*). We are playing for high stakes — after all, Hashem states that His *malchus* (in the *possuk* which states this, the words used are His Throne and

His [full] name) is lacking until the eradication of those who would deny Him.

The Gra, in his special commentary to Chanah's Prayer, explains that Esav has four points of attack, which he exercised at four points in history. Not having the space to present the entire, beautiful, deep piece, suffice it to say that Haman was attacking, according to the Gra, the uniqueness of Klal Yisroel's relationship with Hashem — Klal Yisroel inasmuch as they are, as described in the sixth *perek* of Avos, *kinyan echad*, one of the capital assets, one of the primary possessions, of Hakadosh Baruch Hu in the world. Not Klal Yisroel *per se*, the Gra is saying — but rather their **singularity** as Hashem's agents in this world.

The Gra explains in his commentary to Megillas Esther (8:16) that the four mitzvos alluded to in that *possuk* (*orah v'simcha v'sasson v'yikar* — Torah, Yom Tov, *milah*, and tefillin) are special in that they are *osos*, signs, insignias, symbols of the Jews' affiliation and bond with Hashem. And as **Haman**, a scion of Amalek, tried to eradicate that association, upon his defeat the Jews reaffirmed precisely those very signposts of our status.

Well, I never reached discussing Purim — the joy, the gaiety, the frolic, the conviviality, the merrymaking. No, not today, a day of funerals and sadness, of melancholy and despondency. But before Purim comes Parshas Zachor... as the Gemara in Megillah states, the *zechirah* (remembering, realizing, and acknowledging the evil) **MUST** precede the *asiyah* (the eradication of it, and the celebration of that eradication).

And maybe, if we are moved to that awareness, we will merit celebrating the Grand Purim of *yemos haMashiach*, when Amalek and *all* the Hamans will be gone, and Hashem — and Klal Yisroel, His loyal servants — will reign supreme.

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