


CHABAD

RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 18 March 2016 - 8 AdarII 5776
Sedra Vayikra - Zachor


DEALING WITH AMALEK

THIS WEEK IN THE SYNAGOGUE WE READ AN EXTRA PORTION FROM A SECOND TORAH SCROLL. THIS is the “Chapter of Remembrance”, the passage telling us always to remember what Amalek did to the Jewish people on the way out of Egypt¹.

Every year, this chapter is read on the Shabbat before Purim (next Wednesday night and Thursday). For this festival celebrates the fact that the Jewish people were saved from the evil designs of Haman, a direct descendant of Agag king of Amalek.

In our earlier encounter, we were attacked by Amalek only a short while after the experiences of the Exodus: the Ten Plagues, the defeat of Egypt, the splitting of the Red Sea and the marvellous deliverance from harm. Manna began to fall from heaven daily. There was a truly miraculous dimension to life. Other nations heard about all of this, and were filled with awe. There was a chance that the entire world would respond to the revelations of G-d which were taking place.

And then: the evil nation of Amalek had to spoil the mood! Ignoring everything spiritual and holy, Amalek attacked the Jewish people. The Sages explain that there was a layer of protective clouds surrounding the majority of the two million men, women and children

	In Loving Memory of Mrs Jeanne Gewolb-Sostrin (Yenta bas Devora) ה"ע - 15 Tevet 5772 Dedicated by her son Dr Roger Gewolb שי'
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who were being led by Moses through the desert.

These were the “Clouds of Glory”. Amalek was not able to penetrate this layer. So instead the Amelikites attacked the weak stragglers, weak spiritually rather than physically, those who for some reason had wandered outside the protective Clouds of Glory².

We fought off Amalek. We were successful. Joshua battled, inspired by Moses. But G-d told us always to remember this, for “there is a war of G-d against Amalek, from generation to generation”. There is a special command for us to remember and eradicate Amalek. But where is Amalek today?

The Talmud informs us that we can no longer identify the ancient peoples of the Middle East since the Babylonians up-rooted and redistributed all the nations. So how do we remember and eradicate Amalek today? The key is provided in Chassidic teachings. The word *Amalek*, in Hebrew, has the same numerical value as the word *Safek* meaning ‘doubt’³.

Doubt reduces enthusiasm for Judaism. With surety and confidence in our beliefs we can stride forward, advance and achieve. But the person perplexed by doubt is uncertain which way to move, and whether to act at all.

“On the one hand, maybe I should. But on the other hand, maybe I should not. But perhaps...?” Doubt leads to inaction. Inaction breeds apathy. And so another day goes by...

What is the best cure for Amalek? One suggestion is study - study of Torah. If you *know* more, you have a firmer base for your decisions. Through a dedicated approach to Torah study, we gain knowledge and, hopefully, a measure of clarity. Another suggestion is: action. Decide to do *something*. Metaphorically, you jump into the water.

As in a famous Torah image, the Sea splits. You have done the right thing, the right action, opening the pathway towards a better world.

1. Deut.25:17-19. 2. See Rashi to Deut. 25:18. 3. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s *Likkutei Sichot* vol.21, p.98.

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SEDRA VAYIKRA

LOVE MATTERS

"Allan!" Mrs. Jacobs yelled up the stairs, for what seemed to be the fiftieth time.

"Allan Reuben Jacobs, get down here this very minute! We're leaving now and I'm not calling you again!"

"I'm *coming*, Mum," Allan called back, pleadingly. "Wait a sec." There was a clatter and Allan was downstairs, his shoes in his hand.

"Thank you," Mrs. Jacobs said, looking relieved. "Please get your coat while Dad turns the car around. You'll put your shoes on in the car."

"OK." He hurried to do what he was told. A second later he was outside, and quickly got into the car. "Sorry Mum, I was just trying to finish something."

"It's fine, darling. I was just worried we'd be late for the Bar Mitzvah." They were going to a family Bar Mitzvah in Manchester and they had a long drive ahead of them.

"So, Allan," Mr. Jacobs said pleasantly as they drove round the roundabout and onto the motorway. "What

have you been learning recently?”

“Well, we were learning about Purim and Sedra Vayikra. Purim comes next week, and the Sedra is Vayikra. I was actually thinking about what we learned when Mum was calling me, because the Sedra begins with G-d calling Moses.”

“And can you tell me something special about that?”

“Yes – how the word ‘Vayikra’ – which means ‘and He called’ – was an expression of love, used by the angels, as we mention in the daily prayers, that the angels call one to the other and they say ‘holy, holy, holy’. So G-d used the same word when He called Moses, calling him with love”.

“Wow. Calling with love. But what does that have to do with Purim?” asked Mrs. Jacobs, curiously.

“Well, I think it’s that the Jewish people in the time of Haman’s decree against them were all facing this terrible threat together. The whole people was unified, everyone loved each other. That’s why we celebrate Purim by giving gifts of food to each other, to express our love. Also, in relation to G-d, all the angels are equal. And with Purim too, the Jews all felt equal to each other, all were ready to sacrifice their lives for G-d.”

“Very nice,” Mr. Jacobs said. “So we should all love our fellow Jew, and vote for equality among all humanity....”

“Yeah...”

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