

# The Rebbe's Discourses

Summaries of points from the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל

פרשת פקודי פורים תשל"ג ד"ה איש יהודי בלתי מוגה

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## THE POWER OF THE KING WITHIN

**A**N IMPORTANT VERSE IN THE MEGILA IS: 'THERE WAS A JEWISH MAN IN SHUSHAN THE CAPITAL CITY NAMED MORDECHAI the son of Yair the son of Shimi the son of Kish, a man of the Tribe of Benjamin'<sup>2</sup>. The Talmud and Midrash comment on the names of Mordechai's forebears and explain each of them in terms of the power of prayer. This suggests that prayer had a central role in Mordechai's success in saving the Jewish people. Apart from the obvious idea that he and all the Jews prayed to G-d to save them, the discourse presents another significant aspect of prayer, as will be explained.

The saving of the Jewish people from the decree of Haman was part of the wider context of the battles of Amalek against the Jews. They first attacked them just after the Jewish people had been delivered from Egypt. At that point the Torah declares that there is a battle between G-d and Amalek for all generations<sup>3</sup>. Rashi comments on that verse that the Name of G-d will not be whole until the eradication of Amalek.

The Talmud states<sup>4</sup> that when the Jewish people entered the Land of Israel they were commanded to do three things: to appoint a king, to go to war against Amalek, and to build the Temple. They did appoint a King – King Saul, from the Tribe of Benjamin, and G-d commanded him to battle against Amalek and

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<sup>1</sup> Maamar Ish Yehudi Purim 5733 (1973). It was printed in Dvar Malchut Pekudei 5784. It was not edited by the Rebbe.

<sup>2</sup> Esther 2:5

<sup>3</sup> Beshalach, Exodus 17:16.

<sup>4</sup> Sanhedrin 20b

wipe them out<sup>5</sup>. But Saul felt mercy for Agag, the King of Amalek, and did not kill him outright. While he was later killed by the Prophet Samuel, in the interim Agag had relations with a woman who bore a son, and a later descendant of that son was Haman the Aggagite, who sought to destroy the Jewish people at the time of Purim, and who was finally hung together with his ten sons.

Mordechai, the hero of the Purim story together with his niece Esther, was a descendant of King Saul, and was thus putting right the error of his ancestor. As the Talmud states<sup>6</sup>, the initial goal was the appointment of a King, the wiping out of Amalek and then the building of the Temple. This would re-establish the wholeness of G-d's Name.

The discourse asks: why is there such a focus on Amalek? Surely the seven nations who dwelt in the Land of Israel, and who had to be conquered by the Jewish people in order for them to settle there, were of more consequence?

The answer is seen in another verse in the Torah: 'The first of Gentile nations is Amalek, and in the end they will be destroyed'<sup>7</sup>. The seven nations which dwelt in the Land of Israel are indeed the spiritual source of the seventy nations of the world. Amalek is above and beyond them, the 'First'<sup>8</sup>. Amalek was the first to attack the Jews after their miraculous escape from Egypt and the miracle of the Splitting of the Sea. Amalek is impervious to the holiness of the Jew. Hence the Torah declares that the total destruction of Amalek is essential. But to really accomplish that, one needs a King.

Now let us see what this means for the inner spiritual life of the individual. The seven nations which dwelt in the Land of Israel before the advent of the Jews represent seven bad character traits. Each person is faced with the struggle to eradicate these. A Chassidic [and psychological] technique for doing so is Hitbonenut, Contemplation. Using subtle cerebral strategies a person can rechannel inappropriate feelings, whether of love or hate, or of other varieties of negative and destructive emotion.

But the inner Amalek is different. One of the terms the Torah uses about Amalek's attack on the Jewish people is that Amalek 'encountered you on the way..<sup>9</sup>. This can also be translated as 'made you cool on the way..'. The personal inner Amalek cools off a person's ardour and enthusiasm. It refuses to recognise the spiritual, the holy, the miraculous. For the inner Amalek, nothing has deep meaning, everything is prosaic.

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<sup>5</sup> I Samuel ch.15

<sup>6</sup> Sanhedrin 20b

<sup>7</sup> Balak, Numbers 24:20.

<sup>8</sup> One could suggest that Amalek expresses that aspect of the Gentile world which cannot tolerate the Jew.

<sup>9</sup> Ki Tetze, Deut.25:18. See Rashi's commentary.

How does one counter this kind of inner Amalek? Contemplative strategies may well not be effective, because Amalek stands beyond the ordinary passages of thought.

Instead, one needs a King. One needs to be in touch with one's own inner King, that sublime inner force which can decree and command, and before which one's inner Amalek submits in total surrender, and is peacefully eradicated.

That inner King is one's inner point of total abnegation before the Divine. This is one's true spiritual essence. One of the key ways to reach that point of abnegation to the Divine, is through prayer. Chassidic prayer enables one to go beyond one's ego, to reach one's own inner essence. This explains the emphasis on prayer in the Midrashic explanation of Mordechai's forebears.

Spiritual prayer, and selflessness, are the key to access one's inner King. By accessing this point, one becomes master of one's own being.

Then the Temple within can be truly constructed, revealing the presence of the Divine in every detail of one's life: in one's wisdom, understanding and knowledge; in one's thought speech and action.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care