



A Taste of Torah

Zero Tolerance

by Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

Jews are generally known to be kind and merciful brings, not warmongers and killers. At times, during the course of history, we have had to go to war to fight enemies and destroy people who wanted to kill us. But there is one nation which stands out in how the Torah instructs us to deal with them.

Amongst the many commandments in this week's Torah reading, the final one is the mitzvah to remember what Amalek did to us on the way as we were leaving Egypt. The Torah describes that "he happened upon you on the way, and he struck those of you who were hindmost, all the weaklings at your rear, when you were faint and exhausted, and he did not fear God." (Ki Seitzei 25:18) The climax is the command to wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens.

The Jewish People have had many enemies over the generations, but none of them received such a strong and harsh decree. Only Amalek has to be completely eradicated from the face of the Earth. While we understand that they were wicked people and definitely did not fear G-d, what stands out about their wickedness more than all the other evil people in the Torah? Obviously, at their root lies something which has to be completely eradicated. What's the secret?

The Medrash (Eichah) relates a strange practice that the Amalakites engaged in during their battle with the nascent Jewish Nation. They would take the *milah* (circumcised organ) of the Jewish men they killed and throw it skyward. As they did so, they exclaimed to God, "This is what You chose; take back what You chose." This seems to be a clue to the ideology of Amalek. Definitely very provocative words, but what is the depth

that Amalek was trying to convey?

The Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna; 1720-1797) explains this Medrash with a few cryptic words: Amalek wanted to uproot the Creator of Heaven and Earth, therefore, they sent the *milah* back up to Heaven.

Rabbi Moshe Shapiro (1935-2017) expounds that Amalek believed in the existence of G-d. They believed that there exists an Earthly physical realm and a Heavenly spiritual one, but they didn't believe that there is any connection between the two. They denied that what a person does here can have an effect beyond the limits of his physical surroundings. Their philosophy posited that it is fine for G-d to exist in Heaven, but let humans be in charge of the Earth. One should be able to do whatever one's heart desires down here, and it should have no bearing on spiritual realities that are not part of the human existence of this world.

The essence of a mitzvah is precisely the opposite of this belief. What goes on in Heaven affects the physical world we inhabit, and what is done here affects the spiritual worlds, as well. Most mitzvos involve the physical, and a mitzvah's performance has a profound effect upon the spiritual Heavenly realm, as well. One takes clothes and makes them into *tzitzis*, leather is used for *tefillin*, and so on. Every mitzvah done down here in the physical world will create one's share in the World to Come. A mitzvah is the ultimate connection between Heaven and Earth. When a Jewish male receives a *bris milah* (circumcision), his physical body is stamped as holy! This seemingly physical body can effect an increase in holiness in all the spiritual realms.

This is what Amalek couldn't stand. Let Heaven stay in Heaven, and leave the

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Stories for the Soul

Turned on Its Head

based on a story on reivach.net

One day, Rabbi Ezra Attia (1885-1970), the Rosh Yeshivah (Dean) of Yeshiva Porat Yosef, was giving his daily Talmud class. The class that day focused on the laws of the mitzvah (discussed in this week's parsha) of *shiluach haken*, sending away the mother bird before taking her eggs or young. Rabbi Attia discussed a passage of Talmud which questions what procedure to use if one finds a nest on the head of a person. One of the participants commented in a scornful voice, "What kind of discussion is this? Why does the Talmud discuss such an implausible scenario?"

Rabbi Attia answered firmly, "Whatever is written in the Talmud is holy, and we are forbidden to doubt any of it!" The man remained silent, but it was apparent to the others that he was not satisfied and was skeptical of the relevance of this passage.

Shortly thereafter, one of Rabbi Attia's students, who had been absent for an extended time, entered the room. Rabbi Attia greeted him warmly, and inquired as to the reason for his prolonged absence. The student answered, "I was traveling for business reasons. I ended up in India, which is quite an interesting place."

Rabbi Attia asked the fellow to explain what he found so interesting. The student replied, "I saw strange things there that I've never seen anywhere else. Once, I actually saw a man sitting completely still under a tree with his arms folded. He sat in that position for three days, and

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Kollel Happenings

POLICE BRUTALITY AT SEPT TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Daniel Waitz, former law officer, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they explore they investigate this difficult subject. September 5th, 12-1:15 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$25. RSVP info@denverkollel.org.

SFAS EMES: A PIERCING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It is one of the most widely-studied works of our time. Sfas Emes gives us a glimpse into the infinite depths of Torah and Jewish thought. Kollel Scholar Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky is an expert in this great work, and a master in bringing its timeless lessons into daily life. Join Rabbi Karnowsky on Thursdays, 8:15-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

THE LETTERS OF THE LAW: THE MELACHOS OF SHABBOS

Rabbi Shmuel Halpern received *semicha* (ordination) from Beth Medrash Govoha in 2016 and has spent the past four years receiving *shimush* (training in practical halacha) from Rabbi Micha Cohn of Lakewood. Rabbi Halpern now shares his halachic expertise in this weekly class that will help familiarize you with the laws of Shabbos. Monday evenings 8-9 pm at the Southeast Kollel Torah Center, 4902 S. Xenia St.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: What category of food is permitted to be eaten, but refrained from by many on Shabbos?

A: There is a halachic concept of *Pas Akum* (bread baked by a non-Jew), which our Sages restricted to prevent mingling and intermarriage. *Pas Palter* is bread baked by a non-Jewish baker, thus mitigating the personal aspect of it, and its status has been debated by the preeminent Rishonim (medieval halachic authorities). Many forbade it except under extenuating circumstances, while others permitted its use in more,

or all, scenarios. The Mishna Berurah (242:6), quoting earlier authorities, writes that it is proper to abstain from *Pas Palter* on Shabbos. In fact, a major U.S. certifying agency requires that challah (generally eaten on Shabbos) baked under their supervision not be *Pas Palter*!

This week's question: There is a halacha that a Jew must kindle the fire or perform another major part of the cooking process for cooked food to be kosher. What are the various exceptions to this rule?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Moshe Sofer, Chasam Sofer Part VIII

Pressburg was a large community. It was the location of the Hungarian Diet, and the Hungarian Empire's

second capital. The Jewish community had considerable resources, as well as the ability to sustain a major yeshiva.

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Earth on Earth. They took the *milah*, that quintessential sign of connection of the physical to the spiritual, and threw it back toward Heaven. They were conveying that they believed in spirituality, but it exists up there. Take back the *milah*, they declared to G-d, it's all yours, just keep it away from us!

A nation which believes that this world is not connected to any Higher Power and is independent has no place in a reality that is predicated upon that connection. They cannot exist and must be eradicated. They are the antithesis of the essence of our belief. When the Torah relates that they did not fear G-d, that's because they held that in this world, no one is accountable for anything. Such people

have no place in existence, because they have no connection to G-d. If they want to be free of a Creator, we tell them to go ahead and try it. Let's see how long you can last! You may live for a thousand years, but, ultimately, you will disappear from the face of the earth.

We, as Jews, believe that this world and the World to Come are closely intertwined. Our entire share in that world is determined by the way we live in this world. Every mitzvah is a proclamation that we believe that G-d is the Creator of Heaven and Earth. I will do a mitzvah down here with something physical and it will have an effect in Heaven, and will ultimately provide my share in eternity.

Stories for the Soul

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on the third day, a bird landed on his head and started to construct a nest in his hair."

Rabbi Attia smiled broadly. "That is quite interesting! We can thus now understand the relevance of the passage of Talmud we just studied!"