



# HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR.  
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## Discovering Family Values

### PARSHAT ZACHOR

My grandmother, Rebbeztzin Elaine Wolf a”h, often shared two expressions which dovetail well with each other: “may Hashem protect us” and “may Hashem surround you with good people.” These mantras resonate as we delve into the lessons embedded in this week’s Maftir and Haftorah readings, exploring interactions between Bnei Yisrael and two nations. The concluding verses of Parshat Ki Teitzei instruct Bnei Yisrael to eradicate Amalek, the only Torah mandated reading.

The story of the Jews’ obligatory war against Amalek as recorded at the end of Parshat Beshelach is immediately followed by the narrative of Yitro’s visit to the Jewish nation. The Haftorah discusses the Keini, descendants of Yitro, and their imperative to distance themselves from the nation of Amalek to avoid annihilation.

Examining the stark contrasts between Yitro and his family, and the nation of Amalek as depicted in the Torah and in Sefer Shmuel, we encounter messages which resonate until this day. Yitro, a Midianite priest, extends hospitality to Moshe, providing refuge and eventually gives his daughter, Tzipora, to Moshe in marriage.

Later, after the Jewish nation receives the Torah at Sinai, Yitro advises Moses on delegating judicial responsibilities, thereby lightening

Moshe’s burden of solitary judgment. Yitro’s counsel underscores his concern for communal welfare and the importance of collaborative leadership. In stark contrast, the nation of Amalek, attacks the Jewish nation at the start of their desert journey, epitomizing moral depravity through unprovoked aggression. They ambush Bnei Yisrael, targeting the weak and defenseless—an act condemned by the Torah, resulting in the mandate of the eradication of Amalek’s memory from the earth.

The disparity between Yitro’s family and Amalek is further illuminated in Sefer Shmuel. While Yitro’s descendants embody righteousness and honor, the nation of Amalek persists in hostility and aggression against Bnei Yisrael. King Shaul is commanded to eradicate Amalek but does not follow Hashem’s directive. He does however, address the descendents of Yitro, directing them to separate from Amalek lest they be caught in the destruction. The Abarbanel highlights the long lasting impact of our deeds on our immediate family and on others. The chesed conducted by Yitro, protected his family for many generations while the evil of Amalek continued on for centuries. These two nations reflect opposite approaches, but underscore how the choices we make now have far-reaching effects.

May our efforts to eradicate the evil of

Amalek be recognized and may Hashem protect us from their ways. At the same time, may Hashem surround us with good people like Yitro and his descendants. ■

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