



## PROBING THE PROPHETS

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# “Zachor”! “Never Forget!”

“....Timcheh et zeicher Amalek mitachat hashamayim”

The special Maftir reading for Shabbat Zachor, the Shabbat before Purim, obligates Israel to destroy the nation of Amalek. The source of this mitzvah is first found in the final p’sukim of parashat B’shalach where, after relating Amalek’s perfidious attack of on the weakest stragglers in the rear of the Israelite camp, Hashem promises Moshe (in the almost exact words of the yet-to-be-commanded mitzvah): “...ki machoh emcheh et zeicher Amalek mitachat hashamayim”. The twice-mentioned requirement to obliterate the very memory of Amalek has troubled many over the years, those who see this obligation as one that seemingly conflicts with the moral ethic laid out in our divinely given Torah.

The discomfort many felt (and still feel) has become far more pronounced over the past century, ostensibly the result of the growing sensitivity to the innocent and less-fortunate. The very idea of destroying those not involved in the “original sin” of the unprovoked attack is seen as an anathema to the entire ethical approach fostered by our tradition!

And that discomfort is fully understandable....if we do not understand the mitzvah.

Consider: Our texts are filled with nations, countries and empires that have oppressed us, persecuted us and even killed us – yet, G-d never commanded us not to forget their

evil to not allow them exist! Yet that is what he charged us to do against Amalek! Why was his actions considered unique so as to be destroyed???

The purpose of the commandment is **NOT** to visit **REVENGE** against a nation or its population. If that were so, we could rightfully argue that the punishment did not “fit the crime”, indeed, such a mandate would have us destroying a nation that no longer exists, punishing individuals who do no evil and, heaven forfend, even be guilty of a “disproportionate” reaction to a single attack.

No. Hashem had no “need” for **us** to take **REVENGE** – for, in truth, only He knows what proper retribution is – “Kel n’kamot Hashem!”! Nor did He “need” His people to destroy an entire nation, something He Himself could have done. But He **DID** expect a moral force in His world to fight against - and to **REMOVE** - the source of pure evil that would prevent the establishment of a moral world! And that struggle to perfect the world and prepare it for G-d’s revelation (“I’taken olam b;malchut Shakai”) depends upon the **removal** of the thoroughly malevolent **IDEAS**, destructive **PHILOSOPHIES** and corruptive **VALUES** that undermine humanity. It demands the courage to reject such cultures that sanctify murder, glorify rape and purify pillage – even when many find reason to support them.

Therefore, we must proclaim that we do

not fight for revenge, but rather, we struggle for morality, for ethics and for the sanctity of life! Sadly, Hashem knew that this struggle would continue into the future, “midor dor” from generation to generation, knowing full-well that the depravity of “Amalekism”, the wantonness of attacking the innocent and defenseless, would poison future cultures... and spread around the world.

Haman learned it, and spread that hatred throughout Persia, the Romans followed in the same path, the medieval Church fathers knew it and taught it to their followers and so did the Inquisitors, the Chmelnikis, Czars and, of course, the nazis, y”sh. ....**And it is the struggle we wage today.**

And that is why Hashem charged us: **“Zachor”! “Never Forget!”**

Our very existence depends on remembering that. ■

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