

NEVER FORGET

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

While we should try to retain all the Torah we learn, there are certain sections that we are obligated to keep in mind daily. In fact, there are six events in our history that the Torah instructs us to remember constantly. Some halachic authorities extrapolate that this obligates us to mention the verses referring to these events every day. Many siddurim list these "zechiros" (remembrances) at the end of the morning services. The Arizal writes that these remembrances are a Torah obligation, which is fulfilled by reciting the Shema and its related blessings. The first remembrance, the Exodus from Egypt, is mentioned explicitly at the end of the Shema, and that of Shabbos is hinted to at the end of the Shema. The Arizal reveals that the remaining four zechiros are alluded to at the end of the second blessing before the Shema.

The Jews are known as the Chosen Nation, and the way that we were chosen was by accepting the Torah. While standing at Mount Sinai, we reached the highest level of closeness that a human being can possibly achieve with his Creator. When we say the words "uvanu vacharta" - "You chose us" - we should remember that we were chosen by Hashem to receive the Torah and "v'keiravtanu" - "He drew us close" - we should keep in mind the powerful experience of Mount Sinai.

After accepting and receiving the Torah, the Jewish people were catapulted to the highest spiritual level, and our mere existence sanctified Hashem's Name. At that very time, Amalek attacked us in order to decrease the awe of Hashem's Name in the world. Amalek's attack is the third of the daily remembrances. When we say "l'shimcha hagadol" - "Your great Name" - we should keep in mind how Hashem's honor was lowered by Amalek's attack following the giving of the Torah.

Following this incident with Amalek, the Jews traveled in the desert for forty years. During this time, Miriam made a slightly disparaging remark about her brother, Moshe Rabbeinu. Miriam's mistake and her punishment are the fifth of the daily remembrances. When we say "l'hodos" - "to give thanks" - we should remember that the tongue was created to praise Hashem and not to ensnare us in forbidden speech (as cited in Magen Avraham 60,2).

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