

# NOT RACIST BUT REISHIS

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

*When he saw Amalek, he took up his parable and said, "Amalek was the first of the nations (Reishis goyim Amalek), and his fate shall be everlasting destruction." (Bamidbar 24:20)*

Reishis goyim Amalek- Amalek was the first of the nations: He came before all of them to make war with Israel, and so Targum renders. And his fate shall be to perish by their hand, as it says, "You shall obliterate the remembrance of Amalek" (Deut. 25:19). Rashi

What had Amalek done so wrong that they are worthy of ultimate destruction? Why are they crowned with the title "Reishis"? Being called "Reishis" is the most exalted name in the universe. "B'Reishis" With Reishis...the Torah is called Rieshis... HASHEM created heaven and earth. HASHEM looks into the Torah and creates the universe, as the Zohar states. B'Reishis- for the sake of Torah which is called Reishis HASHEM created the heaven and earth. The Torah is of primary importance. It predates the world, as a blueprint, as DNA, precedes the man. The world is only worthy because of the study and the guidance the Torah offers to free willed humanity. Israel is also called "Reishis" because we have been selected as protagonists in the paly of history, a primary role in revealing HASHEM's good plan.

King Davis tells us in Tehillim, "The primary wisdom (Reishis Chochmah) is fear of HASHEM" Why is that the chief form of wisdom? Without it nothing makes sense! Go watch a baseball game and ignore the ball. It's small but without it, it is impossible to know what's going on. Leave HASHEM out of the equation of life, and as interesting as things may seem at times, it will register as sound and fury signifying nothing. The primary lens through which to observe reality in a meaningful way is to seek to recognize HASHEM in all phenomena. It's a "Reishis" of thought and of primary import.

In a way, Thomas Edison was a "Reishis". What would the world look like without his invention of the light bulb? Others have taken it to new heights but he was the first, the catalyst. How dark our world would be without him. Similarly, Avaraham Avinu was a "Reishis", having discovered the kindness and the source of all kindness. Avraham, over the course of the last of the 3700 years has lit up the world with an appreciation of his discoveries. He was the first, a real "Reishis". Karl Marx was a "Reishis" too. His myopic picture of a world without HASHEM, gave rise to a Stalin who sent 39 million people to the gulag and put a wet blanket on and an iron curtain around the spirit of a large part of humanity. Chairman Mao gained courage and idealism from the "Reishis" of Marx and he murdered between 70 and 100 million of his people to secure his cultural revolution, blocking, even today, a ¼

of humanity from the opportunity of freedom and dignity and from perceiving the name of HASHEM. How dark the universe is because of the "Reishis" of his false ideals!?

A "Reishis" is the initiator. He catalyzes some dramatic change. He is the first to get something that will later become bigger than big started. He gets all the credit or all the blame. So it better be true. Bilaam spoke with prophetic clarity about the "end of days". He realized that Amalek would be worthy of destruction because they were "Reishis" - first and primary. Amalek was the first to attack Israel when the whole world was quaking with ultra-respect for what HASHEM had done for us during the Exodus. Along came Amalek at the first instance of vulnerability. They cooled us off! It was a suicide mission, as Rashi explains, like someone who leaps into a scalding hot tub, gets burnt him-self, but reduces the heat of the water. Amalek was a primary instigator and the father of anti-Semitism. All future atrocities are to be traced back to their bad "Reishis". Therefore the grudge with Amalek is **not racist but "reishis"**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).