

THE INNER AMALEK

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Tetzaveh

The Inner Amalek

Volume 20, No. 20

11 Adar 5766

March 11, 2006

Sponsored by
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Today's Learning:
Yoma 2:2-3
O.C. 526:6-8
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Pesachim 53
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Kilayim 20

This week, in addition to Parashat Tetzaveh, we read Parashat Zachor, in which we are commanded (Devarim 25:19), "You shall eradicate the memory of Amalek," the nation that launched an unprovoked attack upon Bnei Yisrael immediately after the Exodus. Elsewhere (in the Torah reading for Purim - Shmot 17:14), we read, "I [Hashem] will surely eradicate the memory of Amalek." If Hashem is our partner in this endeavor, asks R' Nachum Mordechai Friedman z"l (the Chortkover Rebbe), why has it proven so difficult throughout Jewish history to defeat Amalek and nations like it?

He explains: Our task and Hashem's task are different ones. Hashem protects us from the physical Amalek, while it is our responsibility to battle the Amalek, i.e., the evil, within ourselves. Moreover, Hashem's ability to destroy the physical Amaleks of the world is dependent upon our destroying our own Amaleks. This is the meaning of the Gemara (Chullin 139a) which states: "Where is Haman alluded to in the Torah? In the verse (Bereishit 3:11), 'Hamin ha'etz' / 'From the tree from which I

commanded that you not eat, did you eat?" When Adam committed the first sin in history, he made possible the existence of Haman and Amalek. (Haman was a descendant of Amalek.)

In truth, however, the difficulties of the exile make it hard for us to battle our personal Amaleks. [Ed. Note: This dvar Torah was said by the Chortkover Rebbe in Vienna, Austria in 1935.] We must therefore look to the verse (Devarim 25:19), "And it will come to pass when Hashem will let you rest from all your enemies around you, [then] you shall eradicate the memory of Amalek." (Doresh Tov)

"Now you shall command Bnei Yisrael that they shall take for you pure, chopped oil for illumination, to kindle the lamp continually." (27:20)

The Gemara teaches: "Pure, pressed oil is required for the menorah, but it is not required for the menachot / meal offerings. Thus, the first oil that comes from the olives is set aside for the menorah, and the second oil is to be used for the menachot."

R' Yitzchak Karo z"l (1458-approx. 1520) observes: Usually, one uses his best oil for cooking, and his inferior oil for lighting. Here, we give the best entirely to G-d (in the menorah), and use the second-best for ourselves (in the menachot, which are partially consumed by man).

R' Karo also notes: The word "chopped" ("kaf-tav-yud-tav") alludes to the first two Temples, the first of which stood for 410 ("tav-yud") years, and the second for 420 ("tav-kaf,") years. Both of these Temples were "chopped," i.e., destroyed. The third Temple, however, will stand forever - "to kindle the lamp continually."

(Toldot Yitzchak)

"They shall take the gold, the turquoise, purple, and scarlet wool, and the linen." (28:5)

What is this verse teaching? asks R' Moshe Feinstein z"l (see back page). Could the artisans have made the Mishkan and its implements if they did not have the materials?

R' Feinstein explains: Hashem commanded that Betzalel and the other artisans be the ones to make the Tabernacle because they were filled with a "spirit of wisdom." But if not for our verse, others from among Bnei Yisrael could have handed the materials to them. G-d did not want this, so He commanded: "They shall take the gold . . ."

Why? R' Feinstein writes that Hashem wanted Betzalel to be involved in the mundane aspects of building the Mishkan as a lesson for future generations. Many people are willing to accept the authority of their rabbi over "spiritual" matters, but they think that a rabbi is entitled to no say in the "mundane" affairs of the shul. (The examples that R' Feinstein gives are the design of, and fund-raising for, synagogues.) That view, our pasuk teaches, is in error.

(Darash Moshe Vol. II)

"Aharon shall bring atonement upon [the altar's] horns once a year, from the blood of the sin-offering of the atonements, once a year, shall he bring atonement upon it for your generations; it is holy of holies to Hashem." (30:10)

Why does the verse say twice that Aharon shall "bring atonement" on the altar "once a year"? R' Shlomo Kluger z"l (rabbi of Brody, Galicia; died 1869) explains:

There are two aspects of our sins. The first is personal; man is responsible for his own sins. The second is communal; if one of us sins, all of us bear some blame because "Kol Yisrael areivim zeh b'zeh" / "All Jews are responsible for each other." Thus, the first atonement is for the personal aspect of the sin, while the second atonement is for the communal aspect. That is why the second phrase refers to atonement "for your generations." When one person sins, the entire generation needs an atonement.

(Kohelet Yaakov: Shekalim, Drush 14)

"Yesod Ve'shores Ha'avodah"

("The Foundation and Root of Divine Service")

This year, we are presenting excerpts from the work Yesod Ve'shores Ha'avodah by R' Alexander Ziskind z"l (died 1794). In Sha'ar Ha'mifkad, Chapter 3, the author writes about the thoughts that one should have on Ta'anit Esther:

The reason for this fast on the 13th of Adar is because on this day our ancestors rose to fight for their lives [against Haman's allies] and they needed G-d's mercy. We do as they did in the days of Mordechai and Esther by gathering to pray to and beseech Him.

In addition, it is written that this fast is an obligation for all Jews because of the miracle that happened on this day--the day on which Haman had planned to exterminate the Jews. When one experiences a miracle, especially when his life is saved, he should fast and pray every year on that day and give thanks to the One Whose Name Is Blessed. It is appropriate for a person to awaken his heart at all hours of this day to thank Hashem for our great salvation.

One should don his Shabbat garments before Minchah and recite the Minchah prayer while wearing them.

R' Moshe Feinstein z"l

R' Moshe Feinstein, whose 20th yahrzeit will be observed on Ta'anit Esther, stands out as the foremost halachic authority for American Jewry in the 20th century. As the sh'ailot u'teshuvot / responsa collected in his Igrot Moshe attest, his halachic opinion was sought on virtually every significant question that arose as Torah-observant Jews adapted to a new civilization in America and enjoyed the benefits of rapid advances in technology. Among the subjects addressed there are questions of Shabbat-observance, medicine (for example, halachic issues raised by new procedures and surgeries), business and legal matters, kashrut, and cultural trends.

R' Moshe Feinstein was born on 7 Adar 5655 / 1895 in Uzda, White Russia, and was named after Moshe Rabbeinu, whose birthday he shared. His father, R' David, was the rabbi of Uzda and a great-grandson of R' Avraham, brother of the Vilna Gaon. R' Moshe's mother, Faya Rachel, was a descendant of the author of the Mishnah commentary Tosfot Yom Tov and of the Shelah Ha'kadosh. (Faya Rachel's sister was the maternal grandmother of R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik.)

R' Moshe's first teacher was his father, who taught the boy all of Tanach before he studied his first page of Gemara. R' Moshe's family reports that throughout his life, R' Moshe studied two chapters of Tanach every day. Young Moshe also was an expert chess player until he realized that the game had ceased to relax him and instead demanded his full strength and concentration. At that point he considered the game to be harmful to his growth in Torah study, and he gave it up.

When the future R' Moshe was 12 years old, he was sent to Slutsk to study in the yeshiva of R' Isser Zalman Meltzer. R' Moshe's primary teacher there was R' Pesach Pruskin. In 1908, R' Pruskin decided to take his students and form his own yeshiva, and R' Meltzer called him to a din Torah before R' David Feinstein. R' Feinstein ruled that R' Pruskin was within his rights and, soon after, the new yeshiva opened. The guest of honor at the dedication was none other than R' Meltzer. One of the original students in the new academy was 13-year old Moshe Feinstein.

When World War I broke out, R' Moshe sought the blessing of the Chafetz Chaim that he be spared from the draft. The elder sage told the young rabbi, "I've heard of you." The Chafetz Chaim then told him, "We learn in Pirkei Avot that anyone who accepts the yoke of Torah is spared from the yoke of the king." Soon after, R' Moshe learned that his call-up had been delayed for six months. As further security, R' Moshe accepted his first rabbinic position at that time, in his birthplace Uzda.

-- to be continued next week --

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adira'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Torah.org](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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