

# NEVER FORGET

*by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch*

The arrival of the Jewish Nation in Refidim soon after crossing the Sea of Reeds brought the discovery there was no water. The masses failed this test and, instead of praying to G-d for relief, turned on the messenger, Moshe, with the complaint "Is G-d with us or not?" (Shemos/Exodus 17:7) While Moshe miraculously provided the needed water, the subsequent attack by Amalek taught them the lesson they failed to learn from the water. But unlike other lessons learned by our forebears, the heinous crime of Amalek is unique in the mandate that it constantly be remembered throughout time. "G-d said to Moshe, 'Write this as a remembrance in the Book and recite it in the ears of Yehoshua (Joshua) that I shall surely erase the memory of Amalek from under the heavens.'" (ibid v.14) "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you were leaving Egypt...It shall be that when G-d your L-rd gives you rest from all your enemies all around, in the Land that G-d your L-rd gives you as an inheritance to possess it, you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven - you shall not forget!" (Devarim/Deuteronomy 25:17,19)

Rabbi Michel Barenbaum (1) expounds that the purpose of this mitzvah (Divine command) is for the Jew to learn the fundamental truth of G-d's personal engagement in the minutiae of his life. Rashi explains that the attack was borne from the question "Is G-d with us or not?" Throughout the Jewish battle with Amalek, while G-d's presence was hidden, it was evident that His protection was manifest. Indeed, the entire purpose of the war was to answer that question: salvation is exclusively in G-d's hands. Moshe raised his hands to lift the eyes of the warriors heavenward, engendering a focus upon their Father in Heaven. The war itself fostered the recognition that G-d is very much amongst us. Thus, this mitzvah is augmented with the directive to constantly remember: always remember the lesson of the war on Amalek, always remember the answer to that question, remember that G-d's involvement is perpetual.

The Jewish Exodus from Egypt came through eleven of the most fantastic miracles since Creation itself. The Ten Plagues and the Splitting of the Sea demonstrated unequivocally that nature is simply G-d's routine, daily miracles, wondrous acts that He suspends or reverses at will. And still they had their question of G-d's involvement. We, three millennia later, surrounded only by His daily miracles, must maintain our focus heavenward. The value and importance of constantly remembering Amalek is magnified. Now, more than ever, the question is not if G-d is with us; rather, we must ask: "Are we with G-d, or not?"

*Have a Good Shabbos!*

(1) 1905-2003; Mashgiach/Spiritual Mentor of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem in New York City

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