

# AMALEK: EXISTENCE AND NON-EXISTENCE

*by Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene*

## *The Mitzvah:*

There is a commandment to remember Amalek's audacious attack on the Jewish nation at Refeidim shortly after their exodus from Egypt. This incident has to be perpetuated as all trace of the Amalekite nation and their evil must be obliterated (See Exodus 17:8-15 & Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

The Jewish people's deadliest foe and bitter archenemy is Amalek. Throughout the centuries, there has been many-a-nation that has plotted against the Children of Israel and persecuted them. If so, why is Amalek singled out as being so irredeemably bad that they are to be eradicated?

The injunction to recall and "never forget" what Amalek did, is an awareness that this nation and its ideology opposes the very existence of the Jewish people and, in fact, runs contrary to the purpose of creation.

Creation of the universe was *yaish m'ayin*, "existence from non-existence". Herein mankind must see G-d from His handiwork and accordingly, commit their lives to serving Him. This is best expressed in the first word of the Bible - *bereishis* "creation was for the Children of Israel, called *reishis*, first and for [their observance of the] Torah that is also called *reishis*" (Rashi, Genesis 1:1). Their exclusive existence is to observe the Torah and uphold its laws through which they reveal the Name and Majesty of G-d to the world.

A Jew sees G-d everywhere; Amalek sees him nowhere.

The Jewish nation only exists to proclaim and enact a lifestyle wherein G-dliness permeates every aspect of existence; a life where Divine Providence, both operating through supernatural acts and the veiled framework of nature, exists. Because it is G-d Himself who creates and defines a state of *yaish*, "existence" out of *ayin*, "non-existence". Therefore, I am, only because He exists and wills it.

Amalek's assault was nothing less than a battle waged against G-d. Where a rebel is unable to get close enough to harm the king personally, he resorts to defacing a statute of the ruler. In the same vein, Amalek cannot harm G-d. So instead, they maliciously target the Jewish nation conscious that this people were chosen as G-d's ambassadors within creation.

The incarnation of evil, Amalek dismisses creation and "existence" as a fluke, or as "*korcha*, happenstance" - this root describing Amalek's "chancing" of the Jewish camp (Deuteronomy 25:18). There is a denial that G-d is running the show - to violate the world's very foundation as fomented

by Israel. G-d's glorious Name and Throne are, by definition, incomplete so long as Amalek exists. For the ultimate good to manifest - namely the revelation of G-d - evil, most prominently seen by Amalek, must be vanquished forever.

His being, like evil itself, is ayin, "non-existence" but which, quite convincingly, masquerades as yaish, "existence". Amalek's pernicious influence makes "yaish" into "ayin". This explains the background to Amalek's initial strike after the Jewish people themselves posed the question: "does G-d exist (ha'yaish) Hashem- in our midst or not (ayin)?" (Exodus 17:7).

Here the chosen nation experienced a "weakening of hands" in Torah (rofu yidahem related to the location of the attack - Refeidim) the blueprint of creation and existence. And at the time of Purim, there was also a laxity in their Torah commitment. In such instances where they fail to live up to their mission of G-dliness, Amalek dominates and threatens the true nature of "existence" itself. Worse still, he emerges to project himself as an alternate reishis to the Children of Israel (Numbers 24:20).

It is up to G-d's chosen people to stop this antagonist in his tracks.

Only by a systematic counter-attack of Amalekite ideology, namely to reinforce Israel's *raison d'etre* of creation, will Amalek and his memory be eradicated once and for all. The proponents of seeing Divine Providence and G-dliness everywhere and anywhere, the Jewish people's very existence is the ultimate negation of everything that Amalek holds dear...as is their tenacious survival through the generations and to observe the Torah. Only the constant reminder of Amalek's personification of evil that must be stopped forever, will the revelation of G-d, the Source of all "existence", be revealed.

Purim celebrates seeing G-d's Hand manipulating natural events behind the mask - even though His Name is noticeably absent from the Megillah. Significantly, this marks the Children of Israel's reacceptance of Torah values, realigned to the purpose of creation and existence, and the negation of the ayin, the "non-existence" of Amalek. This sets in motion the mechanism to the future redemption: of true existence; where evil disappears forever; where G-dliness will permeate the world; and where G- d's Name and glorious majestic Throne be complete. Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene and **Torah.org**.