

# FATE AND PURPOSE

*by Rabbi Aron Tendler*

Sefer Vayikra is all about purpose. It reduces our view of the world to within the walls of the Mishkan (Tabernacle) and the Bais Hamikdash (Temple). What took place there was the purpose of creation. Every service, function, item, person, action, and thought was orchestrated to reflect singular belief and devotion. Service to G-d and humanity was that purpose.

As we have explained in past issues, the Mishkan and the Bais Hamikdash were microcosms of the world as it should have been. Had Adam and Chava not sinned with the Eitz Hadaas (Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), had the Bnai Yisroel (Jews) not sinned with the Golden Calf, the world would have been G-d's Mishkan and Mikdash (sanctuary). That does not mean that the world would have been reduced to the physical structure of either the Mishkan or the Bais Hamikdash. What it does mean is that the world would have reflected the same singular purpose, the same orchestrated belief and devotion, the same service to G-d and humanity. Unfortunately, because we did sin, Hashem (G-d) restricted His overt, undeniable, clarity of purpose to the space of a mountaintop in the center of Yerushalayim (Jerusalem). (And the world wonders why we will never give it up.)

Purpose in the universe reflects upon the unlimited power of G-d as Creator and Maintainer of the universe. It means that all things big and small fit into the exactitude of G-d's intentions. Whether world events or personal moments; whether the international or the interpersonal; whether universal upheaval or personal illness; G-d was, is, and will always be in charge. Whether we understand or not, whether we agree or not, what happens happens because G-d so decreed it to happen. For some, this view of the Divine is liberating and comforting and for others imprisoning and disturbing; regardless, it does not change the reality of G-d's absolute control.

G-d is most discernable in the realm of time and events, and His purpose, both short term and long term, can be ascertained from studying the scope and sequence of history. Far beyond individual destinies will emerge the destinies of nations, and most prominent and mysterious of all will be the destiny of Am Yisroel (the Nation of Israel). A prime example of G-d's presence in the scope and sequence of history is the upcoming story and celebration of Purim. It's a story whose design spanned almost 1500 years and demands our acknowledgment of G-d's absolute dominion.

This Shabbos we also read Parshas Zachor. The Torah recorded Amalek's evil design against the Bnai Yisroel in two places. The first is the end of Parshas Bshalach (Shemos 17:14-16). The second is the end of Parshas Ki Seitzei (Divarim 25:17-19). To fulfill the requirements of "remembering that

which Amalek did to the Bnai Yisroel," we read the verses in Divarim. In and of itself, there is no special reason to read Zachor this Shabbos; however, Chazal (the Rabbis) ordained that we should do so on the Shabbos preceding Purim because of the connection between Purim and the destruction of Amalek.

Haman was a descendent of Amalek and in the end he and his ten sons were all killed. However, there is much more to the story. A study of its scope and sequence reveals G-d's absolute control in the realm of time and events.

Amalek was the son of Elifaz and grandson of Eisav. He was Yakov's great-nephew and our cousin. His development as a nation paralleled the development of the Jewish nation. Unfortunately, the focus of his upbringing was hatred against G-d and Israel. He hated goodness with the same intensity that Yakov and his children hated evil. Because of his hatred, Amalek attacked the Bnai Yisroel as they left Egypt. Led by Yehoshua (Joshua), inspired by Moshe's raised arms, the Bnai Yisroel were victorious against Amalek. Amalek's unwarranted attack against the Jews resulted in the commandment to always remember the evil of Amalek and to eradicate their existence whenever possible.

There were many dimensions to Amalek's sin.

- 1.** Their attack against Am Yisroel was unprovoked and unwarranted. They were not among the seven nations occupying Canaan. They had nothing to fear from the Jews.
- 2.** As Yakov's nephew, they owed him their lives. (Not for now.) Their attack against the Bnai Yisroel revealed them to be ingrates.
- 3.** The only motive they had to attack the Jews was their inbred hatred against G-d, goodness, and the nation He had chosen to be His teachers.
- 4.** Their actions revealed a level of arrogance that denied G-d's dominion over the world. They believed that they could destroy G-d by destroying good and they were prepared to die in order to do so. This is why the commentaries explain that although the nation Amalek no longer exists; their inherent evil does. Therefore, whenever a person expresses unwarranted hatred against the Jews for no other reason than the fact that they are Jews, he or she must be a descendent of Amalek. It also begs from us that we look inside ourselves and identify the elements in our character that might be akin to Amalek. That too must be eradicated!

The story of Purim and the remembrance of Amalek's evil is all about fate and purpose. Decisions that were made 150 years before set in motion a scope and sequence of horrific proportions and potential disaster. Yet we once again celebrate the majesty of G-d's dominion through the survival and growing strength of His chosen people. It is a holiday of recommitment and expressed thanksgiving to G-d for the opportunity of serving His design and purpose.

The following questions are for you to think about...

The record in Shemos states, "...For the hand is on the throne of G-d; Hashem maintains a war against Amalek from generation to generation." Rashi referenced the Medresh Tanchumah that explains the unusual spelling of "throne." The word is missing the "aleph" to show us that "G-d's throne is not complete so long as Amalek exists in the world." (Rashi, Shemos 17:17)

What does it mean for the "throne of Hashem not to be complete?"

How does the destruction of Amalek relate to the coming of Mashiach?

Mashiach must come from the Davidic line of the tribe of Yehudah, why was Shaul (Saul) from the tribe of Binyamin the first king of Israel?

Why is the Holy of Holies within the boundaries of Binyamin while the rest of the Bais Hamikdash is situated within the boundaries of Yehudah?

Shaul lost his kingdom over his failure to destroy Amalek. Why was that moment in history so important? How did Shaul's failure affect the future of Am Yisroel?

Obviously, it is not by coincidence that almost 500 years later, Haman of Amalek would be destroyed by Mordecai of Binyamin. How does that event relate back to the relationship between Binyamin and Yehudah, Dovid and Shaul?

Why is the relationship between King David and Yonatan (Saul's son) lauded as the quintessential love between two individuals?

*Have a wonderful and joyous Purim!*

## **Maftir Zachor**

This week, in addition to the regular Parsha, we read Parshas Zachor. Parshas Zachor is the 2nd of the four special Shabbosim preceding Pesach when additional portions are read from the Torah. The first special Shabbos was Parshas Shekalim. This week we read Zachor, and in a few weeks we will read Parah and Chodesh. There are set rules which determine when each of these additional Parshios is to be read. Parshas Zachor is always read on the Shabbos before Purim.

On Parshas Zachor, we read the additional Parsha found in Divarim, 25:17. As a nation, we were commanded to destroy the nation of Amalek. This nation came into existence at the same time as we did. Eisav's son Elifaz had a son Amalek. Eisav and Elifaz's legacy to Amalek was an undying hatred against the children of Yakov.

At the time of the exodus from Egypt, Amalek traveled hundreds of miles to ambush the newly freed nation in the hope of destroying them. We, as a nation, did not pose any threat to their sovereignty. They lived to the east of Canaan and were not among the Seven Nations occupying Eretz Yisroel. Nevertheless, their irrational hatred against Hashem and us compelled them to attack a harmless and seemingly defenseless nation. In the aftermath of their attack we were commanded

to always remember the evil that is Amalek. It is the reading of this Parsha that is the fulfillment of this Biblical commandment. This mitzvah, according to most authorities, is not restricted by time and must be fulfilled by men and woman.

The Rabbi's selected the Shabbos before Purim for the fulfillment of this Mitzvah because Haman was a direct descendent of Amalek, and Mordecai was a direct descendent of King Saul. The entire story of Purim is directly linked to this Mitzvah and the missed opportunity of King Saul that we read about in the Haftorah.

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