

# PURIM - DON'T LOSE HOPE

*by Rabbi Berel Wein*

The current spate of anti-Semitic media cartoons, op-eds and boycott movements serve to remind us that Amalek is alive and thriving as usual. There was a short period of time a few decades ago when many Jews were lulled into thinking that all of this baseless hatred and nastiness was a thing of the past. Even the most naive among us today realize that this is unfortunately not the case. Therefore, remembering Amalek is a relatively easy commandment to fulfill today - one need only read the newspaper or listen to the radio or TV or view the internet to meet Amalek face to face, live and in person.

How to counteract and deal with Amalek has been a continuing and never ending problem throughout Jewish history. Apparently, no satisfactory and permanent solution to the problem has ever been found. Perhaps that in itself is the basic lesson of the commandment of remembering Amalek. We have to remember that the problem is constant and continuing and that it has remained insoluble for millennia.

We should not be surprised or even overly discouraged by its sinister presence in our lives and world today. We must do everything possible to combat it but we should always remember that it is not given to pat solutions or wishful thinking. It is apparently part of the Jewish condition - our very terms of existence.

The story of Purim is the story of Amalek contained, but not completely defeated and destroyed. Haman is hydra-headed and has always had disciples and followers. Haman and his sons were thwarted and hanged but that did not prove to be much of a deterrent to all of the Hamans that have followed throughout history.

In terms of the destruction of Jews, Hitler was far more successful than was Haman having killed six million Jews in five years of hate and terror. Yet Hitler destroyed Germany completely as well, with far more Germans than Jews being killed in that terrible and tragic war.

So again, one would think that the lesson of Amalek would have been learned by now. But the reality of Amalek is that it defies logic, self-interest and history and its lessons. Purim is our only hope in containing Amalek. Purim is always hidden, unpredictable, surprising and unexpected. Yet it is also a constant in Jewish life and history.

The survival of the Jewish people remains as the miracle of all history and that miracle is omnipresent in our current world. The existence and accomplishments of the State of Israel is an

offshoot of this constant and continuing miracle. Israel and its achievements give us a sense of Purim every day of the year. The miracle may not be superficially visible but it is certainly present and alive.

The Talmud's statement about the inability to distinguish between Haman and Mordechai is indicative of the mystery of Purim. Purim is not always what it appears to be at first glance. It is the hidden part of Purim that fascinates and confuses us. Our salvation is always unexpected and many times defies any form of human wisdom and expertise.

Purim tells us never to despair or lose hope regarding our current difficulties and uncertain future. It is easy to fall into a funk when viewing all of the difficulties that surround us. Purim preaches to us that such a dark attitude is inconsistent with Jewish faith and Torah values. That is why the rabbis stated that only Purim is the only eternal holiday on the Jewish calendar.

We will always need Purim and its message to continue to function and achieve. For without Purim present and operative, we fall into fearing that Amalek may yet, God forbid, triumph. So let us rejoice in the knowledge that Purim is here with us and all will yet be well for the nation and people of Mordechai and Esther.

Shabat shalom  
Purim samech

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