

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

אשר קוד בדרך ויזנב בך כל הנחשלים אורחך ואתה עוף ויגע ... וזדה בהניה ה' אלקך לך מבל איבך ממניב (דברים כה-ז.ח.)

Over the past 2 weeks, as the Russian army massed 100,000 troops on the borders of Ukraine, it was clear to many that an invasion was imminent. Like most Ukrainians, Rabbi Yonatan Binyamin Markovitch, the chief rabbi of Kyiv and a well known personality, didn't believe it. But as fear and uncertainty gripped the population, and urgent messages from the Israeli embassy telling him to leave the country multiplied, he sprang into action. When the bombs and shelling began, he moved his family to the JCC and sheltered in the basement there. Sixty frightened Jews joined them, plus some non-Jewish neighbors.

At 3 AM Friday night, Kyiv was targeted with massive bombing. In the morning, a man from the Ukrainian Special Services appeared. He disclosed to the rabbi that Putin, frustrated with the slow progress of the invasion, was bringing in fierce warriors from Chechnya. These were Muslim extremists who hated Jews and would likely target Rabbi Markovitch. "You want to protect your people," he told them ominously. "But by staying here, you are drawing a target on their backs."

The Markovitches reluctantly realized that the only way to protect their community was to leave, but they were determined to take as many Jews as they could with them. But many were afraid to leave it all behind and face the dangers of the road, as Russian bombs, missiles, and rockets kept falling. In the end, only 13 people joined the Rabbi and his wife Inna. Their 22-year-old son plus a young couple with two daughters would ride in the Markovitch 7-seater. The Markovitch's oldest son, his wife, and three daughters would ride in another car. A third car would carry a married couple with Israeli citizenship, an older woman whose apartment building had been bombed while she was out food shopping, and a 21-year-old student.

The convoy left right after *Shabbos*. They would be driving at top-speed, and could not be weighed down by suitcases. Inna quickly ran home and grabbed their documents. She left all their possessions behind – including her *Shabbos* candlesticks.

A curfew was in effect. The highway out of Kyiv was jammed with a solid line of barely moving cars. The man from special services, whom they began to call "the angel" led his convoy down the oncoming traffic lane, apparently immune to censure. Every few kilometers, they were stopped at checkpoints manned by both Ukrainian soldiers and volunteers wielding axes, knives, and sticks. The angel had instructed them to open their car windows (in the freezing cold) so they could be clearly seen as he produced documentation that eventually got them waved through. "The soldiers and volunteers were nervous, and we were afraid that someone accidentally would shoot," said Inna. Indeed, they heard that someone was shot.

As soon as they left the vicinity of Kyiv, the angel bypassed the congested highways. He sped up to 160 km per hour (100 mph) and drove on dirt roads and through bumpy fields where no road existed. Inna was terrified that their tires would be punctured in the rough terrain, and their escape would end, helpless, in the dark remote countryside. But somehow, for 14 hours, their convoy barreled through. "Every ten minutes with me," the angel later told them, "you saved three hours."

Their tires held out until they reached the Rumanian border; then, at the point of safety, they got two flat tires. They waited at the crowded border for ten hours. When it was their turn to pass, they were stopped due to document problems with two of the vehicles. They gave valid excuses but the Ukrainian border guard was unmoved. He insisted that those two cars could not leave Ukraine. He demanded that they abandon the cars and march 13 kilometers in the rain (with young children) to the nearest Rumanian bus stop. Rabbi Markovitch prevailed on him, "Please, we're exhausted, hungry, and dirty."

"You Jews are always dirty," the border guard retorted. "Shame on you!" Rabbi Markovitch, a former IDF officer, shouted. "How dare you! I'm the Chief Rabbi of Kyiv." Hearing the tumult, a higher-ranking border guard came running to the scene. Full of apologies, he told Rabbi Markovitch, "Honored rabbi, we're very sorry. Please just go. Go in peace. Goodbye." And he gestured all the vehicles through the border. Once on the other side, they were able to repair their two flat tires. The angel checked them into a hotel in the first Rumanian town, and the next morning took his leave.

Was he *Eliyahu HaNavi*? "I don't know," says Inna, smiling. They arrived safely in Israel on Thursday March 3. (Aish.com)

ויבא שאול עד עיר עמלק וירב בנחל ... (שמואל א' ב-ה)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

The *HafTORah* read on *Shabbos Zachor* details *Shaul Hamelech*'s failure to fully eradicate the nation of *Amalek* – men, women, children, etc. Being the compassionate person he was, *Shaul* left King *Agog* of *Amalek* alive to make an example of him, but in doing so he violated *Hashem's* direct command which caused him to lose the crown.

Chazal (*Yoma 22a*) say that before he initiated the attack on *Amalek*, *Shaul* wondered what the young *Amaleki* children had done to deserve death. Still, upon *Hashem's* direct command, *Shaul* went ahead and killed the children. But why indeed were the young children deserving of death?

R' Shmuel Rozovsky ז"ל (Rosh Yeshivas Ponevezh) explains that today's twisted society has warped the basic

fundamentals between Jew and gentile. This mindset has created the belief that every human being is exactly the same regardless of their affiliation or status, however, *Chazal* emphatically say that the world and everything in it was created solely for the purpose of serving *Klal Yisroel*.

While this may seem elitist, it is nevertheless true. The world and all its environs, was created to serve the needs and requirements of each and every Jew, and to help them further their service to *Hashem*. The **Rambam** states that a gentile father can sell his son into slavery, therefore, although an *Amaleki* child may seem to be innocent, he is still nothing more than an asset to his father and as such the father's death decree filters down to the child as well.

ונתנו בני אהרן הבחן אש על המזבח וערכו עצים על האש ... (ז-א)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"L

מחשבת הלב

As this *Shabbos* coincides with *Parshas Zachor*, I thought it would be appropriate to connect the two *inyanim*. *Amalek*, as we know, attacked the *Yidden* in the *midbar*, "*Asher koarcha baderech*." **Rashi** explains that this "cooled off" the trepidation and fear of the Jewish people, that the nations of the world felt until that time - "*Korcha*" comes from the word "*kar*", cold. This cooling process has a "chilling" effect on us as well, causing our own *avodas Hashem* to become less passionate.

Rashi on the above *posuk* states that even though a fire comes down from *shamayim* to consume the *korban*, we must nevertheless bring our own fire. *Al pi drush* we can say that although *Hashem* helps us become closer to Him, we must still provide our own fervor and fire to begin this relationship. Hence, *Amelek*, the antithesis of this concept, whose entire purpose was to "cool off" the world, as well as the Jewish people, must be annihilated to keep our warmth and fervor going strong.

There is another *machshava* which I saw from **R' Dovid Soloveitchik ז"ל**. In the piyut of "אשר הניא" which is recited after reading *Megillas Esther* on *Purim*, we say, "*v'lo zachar rachamei Shaul ki b'chemlaso al Agag nolad oyeiv*." He explains that bad *middos* are the root of evil, and those people exhibiting these negative attributes are deserving of punishment. *Haman* should have shown *hakaras hatov*. The *Rishonim* teach us that a basic tenet of *avodas Hashem* is the realization that we owe everything to *Hashem*. So, on this *Shabbos*, let us be "*zocher*" - remember - the multitudes of *Hashem's chasadim*, unlike the *Amalekim* who are טובה and "*lo zochar*." If we properly internalize and realize just how obligated we are to thank *Hashem* for all that He does for us, our souls will be ignited with the enthusiasm needed to do *avodas Hashem*. *K'sheim she'asa nisim then, may Hashem also perform nissim, now, and bring Moshiach and the salvation we so desperately need!*

משל למת הדבר דומה

דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אלם אדם כי יקרב מכם קרבן לה' (ב-א) **משל**: When **R' Moshe Feinstein ז"ל** became the *Rov* of Luban at a very young age, there was a Jewish communist trouble-maker in town who used every opportunity to make his co-religionist's lives difficult. When the man died, his wife came to **R' Moshe** with his will, and with the strange request that was written in it. The man had explained that he regrets all that he did in his lifetime and as an atonement for his sins, he is asking to be buried in an upright position in the cemetery, and not the usual horizontal position.

R' Moshe emphatically denied this request. *Halacha* states that a person must be buried horizontally, not vertically, and as the rabbi of the city, he would not allow him to be buried in such a disrespectful manner. Even after persistent requests from the family to honor the will of the deceased, **R' Moshe** wouldn't budge. *Halacha is halacha*, no wavering!

Not long after, a few KGB agents were seen digging in the Jewish cemetery, at the newly dug grave of this man. They peaked inside his coffin, discussed the matter amongst themselves, and left. It seemed strange at first, but it didn't take long for the city leaders to learn what had transpired. This wicked man had informed his KGB cohorts that the Jewish community doesn't respect him because he is more devoted to Mother Russia than to his religion. As proof of this, he told them, the Jewish community will bury him in a most degrading way. He had hoped to cause harm to the community but he had underestimated the wisdom of the *Rov* of Luban, who maintained: *Halacha is halacha*, no wavering! **נמשל**: *Chazal* tell us that when we are in a weakened state of *Torah* learning and service to *Hashem*, we are truly vulnerable. Our enemies, most notably the Satan and *Amalek* try to bring us down. The more we adhere to *Torah* and *mitzvos*, the more we can expect to be spared from the onslaught of such evil.

זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך ... (דברים כה-ז.ח.) ממצרים. אשר קוד בדרך ... (דברים כה-ז.ח.)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

The **Nesivos Shalom** tells us that *Parshas Zachor* is one of the holiest and most important *Shabbosos* of the year. It is the time that we have the unique opportunity to rid ourselves of all of our problems and truly be *B'simcha!* We all go to *shul*, men, women and children, because we are all affected by our enemy **AMALEK**. *Amalek* is the force of evil in this world. His power is to place fear and doubt in our hearts and minds that remove *Hashem* from the picture. As we read in *Parshas Zachor*, what was it that *Amalek* did to us? "*Asher KORCHA Baderech*" - they made everything in your path a **MIKREH**, a coincidence. They took out the meaning and purpose that makes life so wonderful. The power of *Amalek* makes us believe in happenstance.

This is similar to happiness, because *Amalek* leads us to believe that when things go well in our lives coincidentally, then we can be happy! Happiness depends on happenstance. When everything goes your way, you are happy. When things are rough, you are miserable! There is no rhyme or reason, no method to the madness! This is the philosophy of *Amalek* and of course, the world at large. On *Shabbos Zachor*, we can remove this negative power from our minds and hearts! We need to remember what *Amalek* did to us and what he continues to do to us until this very day, so that we can wipe him out of our lives!

The *Gemara* tells us, "*Ayn Simcha k'hataras hasfeikos*" - there is no joy like the removal of **DOUBT**. The numerical value of *Amalek* is the same as the numerical value of **SAFEK** (240), which means doubt! When we listen to the words of *Parshas Zachor* intently and have *kavana* to eradicate all the fears, doubts and anxieties from our heart, then we are filling ourselves up with the joy of *Adar*. We are fulfilling the words of the *Gemara*, "*Mishenichnas Adar marbim B'simcha*". And we are preparing for the great day of *Simchas Purim* which is filled with "*Ora, v'simcha, v'sasson, v'yikar*". Every day of our lives is a special gift from *Hashem*, as long as we make Him the focus of our lives! *A Freilichen Purim!*