



## “Remember what Amalek did to you”

# The Valuable Lesson Learned from the Battle with Amalek the Klipah of “Ga’avah” that Provoked the Blasphemous Thought: “Is Hashem in our midst or not?”

The Shabbas Kodesh that approaches auspiciously is known as Shabbas Zachor. This designation reflects the fact that our blessed sages in the Mishnah (Megillah 29a) instituted that on the Shabbas immediately preceding Purim, in addition to the regularly scheduled Torah portion, we also read the passage containing the following command (Devarim 25, 17): **“זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק—remember what Amalek did to you.”** Thus, we fulfill the mitzvas asei of remembering Amalek. Rashi explains the rationale for this practice: **We are to read parshas Zachor on the Shabbas adjacent to Purim in order to connect the eradication of Amalek with the eradication of Haman.** As we know, Haman HaAggagi was a descendant of Amalek. Hence, it is fitting that we explore the mitzvas asei of remembering Amalek at this time:

**“זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים, אשר קרך בדרך ויזנב בך כל הנחשלים אחריך ואתה עיף ויגע ולא ירא אלקים. והיה בהניח ה' אלקיך לך מכל אויביך מסביב בארץ אשר ה' אלקיך נותן לך נחלה לרשתה, תמחה את זכר עמלק מתחת השמים לא תשכח.”**

**Remember what Amalek did to you while you were departing from Egypt, how he happened upon you on the way, and he attacked at your rear, all the weaklings that straggled behind — while you were tired and exhausted; and he did not fear G-d. It shall be that when Hashem, your G-d, allows you to rest from all of your enemies that surround you, in the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you as an inheritance, you shall eradicate the memory of Amalek from beneath the heaven — you shall not forget!**

Currently, it is not possible to actually fulfill this positive command to eradicate Amalek, since we do not know who Amalek is. Furthermore, even if we could identify the descendants of Amalek, we are still in galus awaiting the coming of the Melech HaMashiach. When he arrives, the fulfillment of the passuk above will be realized: **“It shall be that when Hashem, your G-d, allows you to rest from all of your enemies that surround you, in the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you as an inheritance.”** Only then will we be able to **“eradicate the memory of Amalek from beneath the heaven.”**

Notwithstanding, we are still obligated to fulfill the mitzvas asei of remembering Amalek: **“Remember what Amalek did to you while you were departing from Egypt.”** Hence, we will endeavor to explain the practical significance and purpose of the mitzvah of remembering Amalek when we cannot actually wage battle against him. Additionally, why does the passuk emphasize that this happened during the exodus from Mitzrayim? This indicates that one of the things we must remember is that Amalek’s malice was perpetrated while we were leaving Mitzrayim.

### **Amalek Attacked Yisrael as Punishment for Their Lack of Faith in Hashem**

We will begin our investigation by focusing on a crucial aspect of the mitzvah of remembering Amalek. Why did they attack us? Here is a pertinent passuk from parshas Beshalach (Shemos 17, 7): **“ויקרא שם המקום מושה ומריבה על ריב בני ישראל ועל: (Shemos 17, 7):”**





the Torah attests to Moshe's extreme humility (Bamidbar 12, 3): "והאיש משה עניו מאד מכל האדם אשר על פני האדמה"—**now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more so than any person on the face of the earth!** Due to his humility, Moshe was the best suited to combats Amalek's ministering angel, the source of "ga'avah." In fact, he was the perfect role model for Yehoshua, his disciple, who adopted an attitude of lowliness, making him the perfect choice to battle Amalek down below.

We can now appreciate, to our chagrin, how Yisrael fell from their lofty perch after being privileged to witness the miraculous feats of "yetzias Mitzrayim." So much so that they had the audacity to inquire blasphemously: "**Is Hashem in our midst or not?**" They fell under the spell of Amalek's heavenly representative, who infected them with thoughts of "ga'avah." Since HKB"H does not rest His Shechinah on those who display "ga'avah," they no longer sensed His presence. Hence, the blasphemy: "**Is Hashem in our midst or not?**"

### An Aspect of the Name Havaya Illustrating His Humility

Let us embellish this thought by explaining why they specifically employed the name **Havaya** when questioning Hashem's presence: "היש ה' בקרבנו אם אין". We have learned in the Gemara (Megillah 31a): "במקום גבורתו של הקב"ה אתה מוצא ענוותנותו"—**wherever you find mention of the might (greatness) of HKB"H, you also find mention of His humility.** The Megaleh Amukos (Vaeschanan 179) teaches us that this is why HKB"H chose to be called by the Tetragrammaton—the four letters of the name **Havaya**. If we spell out the names of each of these letters, they possess the lowest numerical values of all the letters of the aleph-Beis. The sum of the letters that spell the letter יו"ד equals a mere **20**; the sum of the letters ה"י equals a mere **15**; similarly, the sum of the letters וי"ו only equals **22**. The values of the names of all the other letters are greater than these. The Kli Yakar (beginning of Mikeitz) points out the same numerical phenomenon associated with the four letters of the name **Havaya**.

With this in mind, we can suggest that this is why HKB"H rests the name **Havaya** on Yisrael. As it is written (Devarim 28, 10): "וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך"—**then all the peoples of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is proclaimed upon you, and they will fear you.** By making this name emblematic of Yisrael, it assists them to adopt a humble

and lowly demeanor and, thus, to cling to Him. Consequently, if a person does not learn from the name **Havaya** that HKB"H places upon him to display humility, HKB"H proclaims: "**I and he cannot dwell together in the world.**" Then, HKB"H removes the name **Havaya** from such an individual, in keeping with the following truth (Mishlei 16, 5): "תועבת הוי"ה כל גבה לב"—**every haughty heart is the abomination of Hashem.** As explained, "ga'avah"—haughtiness—is diametrically opposed to and incongruous with the name **Havaya** that symbolizes His divine humility.

We can now make sense of Yisrael's inquiry: "**Is Havaya in our midst or not?**" Because they had been infected by the ministering angel of עמלק above, whose name equals ר"ם, alluding to the klipah of "ga'avah," the name **Havaya** abandoned them. Since they no longer displayed an attitude of humility, they became vulnerable to an attack from Amalek below. For, so long as the name **Havaya** rested upon Yisrael and enveloped them, the following applied: "**Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the name Havaya is proclaimed upon you, and they will fear you.**" The moment that sacred name left them due to haughtiness, they were exposed and vulnerable; they were no longer feared by the other nations.

### "Remember what Amalek did לך" Amalek Infects Mankind with the Klipah of "לך"

Following this path of enlightenment, we will now endeavor to explain how we can actually fulfill the mitzvas asef of: זכור את "אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים"—remembering the malice perpetrated by Amalek shortly after the exodus from Mitzrayim. HKB"H wants us to remember. Because even though we witnessed the miraculous feats of "yetzias Mitzrayim," Amalek succeeded in infecting us with the trait of "ga'avah," prompting us to blaspheme and inquire: "**Is Hashem in our midst or not?**" This should teach us the importance of shunning the traits of "ga'avah" and self-sufficiency. It is crucial that we realize that without the assistance of the blessed Almighty, both in material and spiritual matters, we cannot succeed at anything.

We can now add a tantalizing interpretation of the passuk: "לך" -- "Remember what Amalek did to you". Let us refer back to the essay we wrote on parshas Vayishlach. When Eisav met up with Yaakov after years of being apart, he is surprised when he sees Yaakov's family and entourage (Bereishis 33, 5): "וישא את עיניו"

וירא את הנשים ואת הילדים ויאמר מי אלה לך, ויאמר הילדים אשר חנן אלקים את  
 "He (Eisav) looked up and saw the women and children, and he said, "Who are these to you?" He (Yaakov) said, "The children whom G-d has graciously given your servant."

Let us consider the moral implications of this fascinating, profound dialogue between Eisav and Yaakov. We have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 3, 7): "תן לו משלו שאתה ושלך שלו, וכן בדוד הוא: "Give him from what is His; for you and yours belong to Him." And thus, it is said of David (Divrei HaYamim I 29, 14): "For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given to You." The Tanna of this Mishnah is admonishing us to dismiss the misguided perception that there are things that belong to us; instead, it is essential that we recognize that "you and yours belong to Him." In other words, everything in our possession comes from HKB"H. This concept is expressed poetically in the Shacharis service for the second day of Chag HaShavuot: "קרוי מחומר מה מועילו, חומר ומתאנה את שאינו שלו, זה" "קרוי מחומר מה מועילו, חומר ומתאנה את שאינו שלו, זה" —a human being formed from clay, what benefit is it to him? He covets and desires that which does not belong to him; that which is in his possession is not his; he has merely acquired that which is not his . . .

Based on this premise, we can interpret the instructions HKB"H gives Avraham Avinu after he shattered the idols of Terach, his father (Bereishis 12, 1): "לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומביתך" "לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומביתך—go for yourself from your land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house to the land that I will show you. He wanted Avraham to understand that it does not suffice to abstain from the actual practice and worship of "avodah-zarah." It is also necessary to sanctify one's thought process by abandoning the false perception that there are things that truly belong to us. Thus, HKB"H says to Avraham: "לך לך"—leave behind the misguided belief and perception that there are things that belong to you—"לך". Specifically, you must abandon: "מארצך וממולדתך ומביתך" —the "avodah-zarah" that is prevalent in your country, birthplace, and father's home—the belief in man's power and self-reliance. Instead, you must go: "אל הארץ" "אל הארץ—to the land that I will direct you, to Eretz Yisrael, whose kedushah instills in a person the truth that everything he possesses is not actually his but belongs to HKB"H.

Additionally, the Ramban writes in parshas Acharei Mot (Vayikra 18, 25) that all the countries outside of Eretz Yisrael are supervised by seventy ministering angels. Eretz Yisrael, however, is under the direct supervision of HKB"H and not a ministering angel. As it is written (Devarim 11, 12): "ארץ אשר ה'

אלקיד דורש אותה, תמיד עיני ה' אלקיד בה מראשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה" "אלקיד דורש אותה, תמיד עיני ה' אלקיד בה מראשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה" land that Hashem, your G-d, seeks out; the eyes of Hashem, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year until to year's end.

This then is the message HKB"H conveyed to Avraham: **Leave your land, your birthplace, your father's house**—for, those are places of those who worship avodah-zarah and believe in the power and self-sufficiency of man. Since they live outside of Eretz Yisrael and are supervised by ministering angels, they are more likely to worship some form of avodah-zarah. Instead, go **"to the land that I will show you"**; because due to its direct supervision by HKB"H, Eretz Yisrael is imbued with kedushah. That kedushah imparts the awareness that everything in one's possession actually belongs to HKB"H.

Let us add one more tidbit. This concept is alluded to by the term "לך". The letter "lamed" is taller than all the other letters of the "aleph-Beis," and extends above the written line. Thus, it alludes to all the heavenly and spiritual matters associated with man's being—such as his wisdom, understanding and knowledge. The "final chaf," on the other hand, extends below the written line. Thus, it alludes to all the earthly, mundane matters related to man's existence—such as his livelihood and physical needs. These two aspects of human existence were addressed by the command "לך לך". HKB"H was instructing Avraham Avinu to abandon the false, misguided perceptions related both to spiritual matters and physical, material matters.

### The Wicked Eisav Wanted to Infect Yaakov with the Klipah of "לך"

This enlightens us with regards to the spiritual dispute concealed within the dialogue recorded between Yaakov Avinu and Eisav HaRasha. Eisav was a heretic; he believed solely in the power and resourcefulness of man. He attempted to infect Yaakov with the false belief of "כוחי ועוצם ידי"—the conviction that my success and wealth are attributable to my own powers and ingenuity. This is the ideology of the klipah of "לך". Therefore, when Eisav saw the abundant possessions, including all the sheep and cattle, that Yaakov had brought with him, his first question was: "מי אלה לך"—**who are these to you?** He specifically employed the term "לך", implying that Yaakov had acquired all of his wealth due to his own abilities. He tried to convince Yaakov that all of those possessions truly belonged to him.

Yaakov Avinu, however, perceived the spiritual poison and danger inherent in this question. Hence, he replied quickly and succinctly: They are **“the children whom G-d has graciously given your servant.”** Since I am the grandson of Avraham, who heeded the command of **“לֶךְ לְךָ”**, I do not believe in the concept of **“לך”**. Rather, I recognize that everything that I have accomplished and acquired was not due to natural means or due to my own strength and abilities. Even the children I bore were gifts from Hashem--**“הילדים אשר חנן אלקים את עבדך”**.

Therefore, HKB”H impresses upon Yisrael the importance of: **“זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק”**. He wants us to remember that Amalek corrupted us with the klipah of **“לך”**, promoting the undesirable, vile attribute of **“ga’avah.”** After all, he was following in the footsteps of his grandfather Eisav, who tried to infect Yaakov with the klipah of **“לך”** by asking: **“מי אלה לך”**. Therefore, it is incumbent

upon us to follow in the footsteps of our ancestor, Yaakov Avinu, who rebutted Eisav’s question by answering: **“These are the children whom G-d has graciously given your servant.”**

This then is the significance of the passuk: **“וזהיה בהניח ה' אלקיך 'לך' מכל אויביך מסביב”**. **“It shall be that when Hashem, your G-d, allows you to rest from all of your enemies that surround you”**—when you are finally able to rest from the klipah of **“לך”** that your spiritual enemies want to infect you with. **“In the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you as an inheritance”**—because Eretz Yisrael has the auspicious power to eliminate the klipah of **“לך”**, as HKB”H indicated to Avraham Avinu with the words: **“לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך”**—because it is exclusively under the supervision of HKB”H. At that time: **“You shall eradicate the memory of Amalek from beneath the heaven!”**



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