



A Fascinating Remez from the Chasam Sofer

Reading the Megillah Fulfills the Mitzvah of Mechias Amalek ל'העביר ג'לולים מ'ן ה'ארץ Is an Acronym for מגל"ה

Next Shabbas Kodesh is known as “Shabbas Zachor.” We learn in the Mishnah (Megillah 29a) that Chazal instituted the reading of the following passage on the Shabbas preceding Purim (Devarim 25, 17): “זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק”—**remember what Amalek did to you.** This passage commands us in no uncertain terms to wipe out any memory and remnant of Amalek (ibid. 19): “תמחה את זכר עמלק מתחת השמים לא תשכח”—**you shall eradicate the memory of Amalek from beneath the heaven — you shall not forget!** Now, since Haman, the oppressor of the Jews, his wife Zeresh, his advisors, and all of his evil cohorts all descended from Amalek, killing them and eliminating them constituted a fulfillment of the mitzvah of “mechias Amalek”—eradicating Amalek. Hence, as Rashi explains, we connect temporally the passage commanding us to eradicate Amalek with the eradication of Haman in the Megillah.

Let us embellish this thought by introducing a fantastic insight from the renowned Chasam Sofer, zy”a, in Toras Moshe (Purim p. 164b). By fulfilling the mitzvah of reading the Megillah down below on earth—depicting the miraculous eradication of Haman and the descendants of Amalek in that generation—we trigger a corresponding effect above in the heavens. The klipah of Amalek, which still exists, especially during times of galus, is weakened; it will not be exterminated once and for all until the arrival of the final, complete geulah. He provides us with a wonderful “remez”: The word מגל"ה is an acronym for the phrase ל'העביר ג'לולים מ'ן ה'ארץ—to remove abominations (idolatry) from the earth.

Amalek Is Not Mentioned in the Megillah

We find support for the Chasam Sofer’s contention in the holy sefer, Bris Kehunas Olam, authored by the divine kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Koritz, zy”a. He focuses on the passuk related to the battle waged with Amalek (Shemos 17, 14): “ויאמר ה' אל משה כתוב זאת זכרון בספר ושים באזני יהושע כי מחה אמחה את זכר עמלק מתחת השמים”—**Hashem said to Moshe, “Write this as a remembrance in the book and recite it in the ears of Yehoshua, because I shall surely wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens.”**

In the Gemara (Megillah 7a), our sages find an allusion in this passuk to Esther’s request that they memorialize in the Megillah the miraculous eradication of Amalek in Haman’s generation for all future generations. **“Write this as a remembrance in the book”: “Write this”—what is written here (in parshas Beshalach pertaining to the battle with Amalek), and in Mishneh Torah (parshas Ki Seitzei), and what is written in the Prophets (Shaul’s battle with King Agag)—“as a remembrance in the book”—that which is recorded in the Megillah.**

In this manner, the Bris Kehunas Olam interprets the continuation of the passuk: **“Because I shall surely wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heavens.”** Upon review of the texts, we find that the name of Amalek is mentioned in the two battles waged by Yehoshua and Shaul HaMelech against Amalek. Yet, in Megillas Esther, Amalek is not mentioned at all.

This demonstrates the degree to which the downfall of Haman brought about by the miracle of Purim weakened the klipah of Amalek. Furthermore, this foreshadows the total eradication of Amalek that will occur at the time of the future geulah.

This is what was implied when HKB”H said to Moshe: **“Write this as a remembrance in the book.”** Record the miraculous eradication of Amalek in the times of Haman **“in the book”**—namely, Megillas Esther. Correspondingly, HKB”H promises: **“I shall surely wipe out the memory of Amalek”**—in other words, I will not mention his name even once in the entire Megillah, indicating the degree to which his power has been diminished. Along these lines, when the passuk says (ibid. 16): **“מלחמה לה’ בעמלק מדור דור”**—**Hashem wages an ongoing battle with Amalek in every generation**—it mentions the word for generation twice—**“מדור דור”**. This alludes to the two generations in which the name of Amalek was still mentioned—namely, the generations of Yehoshua and Shaul.

We can now appreciate the rationale for Chazal’s institution to read on the Shabbas prior to the reading of the Megillah on Purim the passage commanding us to remember the malice of Amalek—**“תמחה”**—and to totally eradicate Amalek—**“זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק”**. At the time of the battle with Amalek, HKB”H issued a command about recording the miracle of Purim in the Megillah: **“Write this as a remembrance in the book.”** Thus, it is apparent that the mitzvah to remember and eradicate Amalek also includes remembering the eradication of Haman as part of the Purim miracle. This is a wonderful preparation for the reading of the Megillah on Purim that significantly diminishes the klipah of Amalek.

The Megillah Is a Magnificent Tikun for Shaul HaMelech

It is with great delight that we will now examine how the reading of the Megillah portends the weakening and the ultimate, total elimination of Amalek. As we learned from the Chasam Sofer, the term **מגלה** is an acronym for **להעביר גילולים**—expunging the abominations and idolatrous factions in the world. We will introduce several illuminating sources to guide us along the way.

Let us begin with the illuminating words of the Alshich hakadosh in his commentary on the Megillah (Esther 4, 13). Mordechai hatzaddik instructed Esther HaMalkah vehemently to enter King Achashveirosh’s quarters unannounced and

without being summoned. This meant risking her life in order to save Yisrael from Haman’s evil decree. Here is what he said to her (ibid.): **“אל תדמי בנפשך להימלט בית המלך מכל היהודים, כי אם החרש תחרישי בעת הזאת רווח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר ואת ובית—do not imagine in your soul that you will be able to escape in the king’s palace any more than the rest of the Jews. For if you persist in remaining silent at a time like this, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, while you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether it was just for such a time as this that you attained the royal position!** We will endeavor to explain why Mordechai threatens Esther in this manner: **“You and your father’s house will perish!”**

The Alshich hakadosh refers to the first order of business Shmuel HaNavi assigned Shaul HaMelech after crowning him king. The first mitzvah HKB”H wanted him to perform as king was **“mechias Amalek,”** as it is written (Shmuel I 15, 2):

“כה אמר ה’ צבאות פקדתי את אשר עשה עמלק לישראל אשר שם לו בדרך בעלותו ממצרים, עתה לך והכיתה את עמלק והחרמתם את כל אשר לו ולא תחמול עליו, והמתה מאיש עד אשה מעולל ועד יונק משור ועד שׂה מגמול ועד חמור.” So said Hashem, Master of Legions, **“I have remembered what Amalek did to Yisrael—he ambushed him (Yisrael) on the way as he ascended from Mitzrayim. Now, go and strike down Amalek and destroy everything he has; do not have pity on him—kill man and woman alike, infant and suckling alike, ox and sheep alike, camel and donkey alike.**

As retribution for Amalek’s attack on Yisrael shortly after their departure from Mitzrayim, HKB”H commands Shaul to completely annihilate Amalek without pity for women, children, or animals. However, Shaul HaMelech neglects to complete this holy task, as it is written (ibid. 7): **“וידך שאול את עמלק מחזילה בואך: שור אשר על פני מצרים, ויתפוש את אגג מלך עמלק חי ואת כל העם החרים לפי חרב, ויחמול שאול והעם על אגג ועל מיטב הצאן והבקר.”** **Shaul struck down Amalek, from Chavilah to the approach to Shur, which is alongside Mitzrayim. He captured Agag, king of Amalek, alive, and the entire people he destroyed by the edge of the sword. Shaul and the people took pity on Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle . . .** As a consequence, Shaul was stripped of his kingship, as it is written (ibid. 28): **“ויאמר אליו שמואל קרע ה’ את ממלכות ישראל מעליך היום ונתנה לרעך הטוב—Shmuel said to him, “Hashem has torn the kingship of Yisrael from upon you this day and has given it to your fellow who is better than you.”** Then, Shmuel completes the

task by killing Agag (ibid. 33): **“וישסף שמואל את אגג לפני ה' בגלגל”**—**and Shmuel severed Agag before Hashem in Gilgal.**

Chazal teach us that on the very night that Shaul kept Agag alive, he impregnated a maidservant in the prison; she gave birth to Hamdata the Agagite, the father of Haman, who later sought to oppress the Jews. Sources for this are found in the Midrash (Esther Rabbah) and in the Gemara (ibid. 13a). This is the basis for the lyrics of the divine poet recited after the reading of the Megillah: **“המון הודיע איבת אבותיו, ועורר שנאת אחים לבנים, ולא זכר רחמי”**. **Haman displayed the hatred of his ancestors and incited the enmity of brothers** (Eisav and Yaakov) **against the children, remembering not the mercy of Shaul, through whose compassion for Agag, the enemy was born.**

Based on this scenario, the Alshich hakadosh explains: Mordechai understood that HKB”H orchestrates everything from above. So, when he saw that Esther, a descendant of Shaul HaMelech, became queen at the time of Haman’s decree, he perceived the will of HKB”H via his “ruach hakodesh.” He understood that it was imperative for Esther to jeopardize her life in order to save Yisrael from the evil decree. Thereby, she would rectify Shaul’s sin and lapse of judgment.

This then is the message Mordechai conveyed to her: **“If you persist in remaining silent at this time,”** and are not willing to sacrifice your life for the sake of Yisrael; **“relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place”**—after all, the Almighty has many means at His disposal through which to save Yisrael; **“while you and your father’s house will perish”**—this refers to Shaul HaMelech, who will not be afforded a tikun for his lapse that resulted in the birth of Haman. **“And who knows, perhaps it was just for such a time as this that you became the queen”**—in other words, HKB”H arranged for you to become the queen precisely for this purpose, to make amends for the failure of Shaul by sacrificing your life for the salvation of Yisrael.

Explaining the Failure of Shaul HaMelech

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to expand on the explanation of the Alshich hakadosh. How exactly did the actions of Esther HaMalkah provide a tikun for Shaul’s shortcoming? In the Gemara (Yoma 22b), Chazal expound on a passuk (Shmuel I 13, 1), attesting to Shaul’s virtue and integrity: **“Shaul—”בן שנה שאול במלכו, אמר רב הונא, כבן שנה שלא טעם טעם חטא**

was one year old when he began to reign”—this cannot be understood literally, since Shaul was appointed king when he was a young man. **Rav Huna said:** The passuk means that when he became king, **he was like a one-year-old, in that he had never tasted the taste of sin** but was wholly innocent and upright. That being the case, it is bewildering! How could Shaul have made such a terrible mistake? Why did he have pity on Agag, when Hashem commanded him explicitly not to?

In truth, the Gemara (ibid.) provides us with an answer by expounding on another passuk related to Shaul HaMelech (ibid. 15, 5): **“ויבא שאול עד עיר עמלק וירב בנחל, אמר רבי מני, על עסקי נחל. בשעה: שאמר לו הקב”ה לשאול לך והכית את עמלק, אמר, ומה נפש אחת אמרה תורה הבא עגלה ערופה, כל הנפשות הללו על אחת כמה וכמה, ואם אדם חטא בהמה מה חטאה, ואם גדולים חטאו קטנים מה חטאו, יצאה בת קול ואמרה לו אל תהי.”** **“And Shaul came to the city of Amalek, and he strove in the valley.”** **Rabbi Mani said:** This means that Saul strove with God, as it were, **concerning the matter of the valley. At the time when HKB”H said to Shaul: “Now go and attack Amalek,” he (Shaul) said: Now, if on account of one life, the Torah said to bring a heifer whose neck is broken, for all of these (Amalekite) lives all the more so should I have pity. And furthermore: If the men have sinned, how have the animals sinned? Why, then, should the Amalekites’ livestock be destroyed? And if the adults have sinned, how have the children sinned? A heavenly voice came forth and said to him (Koheles 7, 16): “Do not be overly righteous.”**

Notwithstanding, this is still extremely perplexing, and we need to find an explanation. Why did Shaul HaMelech neglect to comply with Hashem’s direct order—to completely wipe out Amalek and show them no pity—by expounding a “kal va’chomer” that clearly contradicted an explicit mitzvah in the Torah: **“You shall eradicate the memory of Amalek from beneath the heaven — you shall not forget!”**

The Klipah’s “אל אחר” Opposes the Principle of “Kal Va’Chomer”

I would like to propose an explanation for this quandary by referring to a citation brought down in the Responsa (Shu”t) of the Doveiv Meisharim (Part 2, 9), authored by the esteemed Rabbi of Tchebin, ztz”l. I also found this explanation in the Arvei Nachal (beginning of Vayeitzei) related to what Lavan said to Yaakov after pursuing him and catching up with him (Bereishis 31, 29): **“יש לאל ידי לעשות עמכם רע, ואלקי אביכם אמש אמר אלי לאמר:”** **—I have the power to inflict**

Thus, our blessed sages are teaching us a valuable lesson. The “nachash hakadmoni”—the primeval serpent—who is the klipah of Amalek and the yetzer hara—is called **“kel acher”**—a **foreign, false god**. As we all know, it trapped Adam and Chava in its deceitful net and persuaded them to partake of the Eitz HaDa’as. This is its strategy and routine method of operation. It applies a “kal va’chomer” that contradicts the true intent of the Torah. Therefore, it stands to reason, that we can learn a misleading, false “kal va’chomer” (as Ravina does above) in an attempt to make a “sheretz” tahor specifically from the nachash (whose sole purpose is to undermine and misconstrue the teachings of the Torah), even though the Torah explicitly teaches that a “sheretz” is tamei.

Battle Amalek Both in Material Matters and in Spiritual Matters

We can now begin to comprehend to some small degree how Shaul HaMelech erred—applying an inappropriate “kal va’chomer” that caused him to dismiss an explicit Torah-directive to eradicate Amalek. This lapse in judgment was caused by the klipah of עמלק—whose gematria equals א”ל אחר. Just as this foreign, false, negative influence opposes legitimate “kal va’chomers” of kedushah; so, too, it traps people, causing them to act improperly, by devising erroneous, misleading “kal va’chomers” that contradict the wisdom and commandments of the Torah. It uses this tactic to control and influence people, chas v’shalom. Therefore, the Torah admonishes us: **“לא יהיה בכך”**—there shall be no “kel acher” within you, nor shall you bow before an alien “kel.”

Let us now return to what HKB”H commanded Shaul HaMelech: **“עתה לך והכיתה את עמלק”**—go, now, and smite Amalek. To interpret this passuk, we will employ a fundamental principle taught by Rabbi Akiva (Pesachim 22b): Whenever the term “את” appears, it comes to include and add on. So, when HKB”H commands Shaul to smite “את עמלק”, He is including something else. In order to vanquish the physical Amalek, it is necessary to first vanquish the klipah of Amalek—the corrupting influence of the א”ל אחר; we must not allow it to confuse us with faulty “kal va’chomers.”

This explains very nicely why HKB”H chose Shmuel HaNavi to convey the message to Shaul HaMelech concerning “mechias Amalek.” As we learn in the Gemara (Berachos 7b): **“דשמא גרים”**—a person’s name has a profound influence on his

life. Now, we can break the name שמואל down into the two components שמו א”ל. This suggests that it was his mission to safeguard the name א”ל of kedushah. Shmuel HaNavi was sent to prevent Shaul HaMelech from going astray by applying a fallacious “kal va’chomer” prompted by the klipah of Amalek—the א”ל אחר.

Unfortunately, Yisrael in Shaul’s generation were not yet worthy to accomplish the complete eradication of Amalek and merit the arrival of the complete geulah. Hence, Shaul HaMelech was not able to withstand the influence of Amalek and its associated א”ל אחר. That being the case, he applied a faulty “kal va’chomer”: **Now, if on account of one life, the Torah said to bring a heifer whose neck is broken, for all of these (Amalekite) lives all the more so** (should I have pity).

By Reading the Megillah We Elicit a “Kal VaChomer” of Kedushah

Continuing along this sublime, royal path, we will now focus on the amazing “remez” taught by the Chasam Sofer—by fulfilling the mitzvah of reading the Megillah, we diminish the klipah of Amalek. Recall that he asserts that this is alluded to by the term מגלה, which is an acronym for גילולים מין—the removing of abominations and untoward influences from the land. Now, we have learned in the Gemara (Chullin 60a):

“דרש רבי חנינא בר פפא יהי כבוד ה’ לעולם ישמח ה’ במעשיו, פסוק זה שר העולם אמרו, בשעה שאמר הקב”ה למינו באילנות, נשאו דשאים קל וחומר... ומה אילנות שאין דרכן לצאת בערבוביא אמר הקב”ה למינו, אנו על אחת כמה וכמה, ומיד כל אחד ואחד יצא למינו, פתח שר העולם ואמר, יהי כבוד ה’ לעולם ישמח ה’ במעשיו.” Rabbi Chanina bar Pappa expounded (Tehillim 104, 31): **“May the glory of the Hashem endure forever; let Hashem rejoice in His works.” This passuk was uttered by the Minister of the World, i.e., the angel charged with overseeing the world. When HKB”H said regarding the trees that they should each emerge from the earth (Bereishis 1, 11) “each after its kind,” the grasses applied a “kal va’chomer” with regard to themselves ... If with regard to trees, which do not naturally grow mixed, as they are large and distinct from one another, HKB”H said: “After its kind,” all the more so with regard to us, since grass naturally grows mixed. Immediately, each and every species of grass emerged after its kind. Then the Minister of the World began and said: “May the glory of the Lord endure forever; let the Lord rejoice in His works,” who do His will even when not explicitly instructed.**

We learn from this passage that the earth expounded the first “kal va’chomer” in history. Furthermore, it inspired the Minister of the World to break out in song: “יהי כבוד ה' לעולם ישמח ה' במעשיו”. Let us suggest an explanation. The earth was aware of the fact that the “nachash hakadmoni”—the embodiment of the klipah of Amalek, the representative of א”ל אח”ר—traps mankind and causes him to fail and go astray by expounding fallacious “kal va’chomers.” Therefore, the earth took the initiative to expound the first “kal va’chomer” in a manner of kedushah. Its aim was to instill in humanity the power to subdue the klipah of Amalek by means of “kal va’chomers” of kedushah, which are associated with the (auspicious) name א”ל.

Now, we have learned in the Gemara (Megillah 14a): “תנו רבנן: ארבעים ושמונה נביאים ושבע נביאות נתנבאו להם לישראל, ולא פחתו ולא הויתרו על מה שכתוב בתורה חוץ ממקרא מגילה. מאי דרוש, אמר רבי חייא בר אבין אמר רבי יהושע בן קרחה, ומה מעבדות לחירות אמרינן שירה ממייתה לחיים לא כל.” **The Rabbis taught in a Baraisa: Forty-eight neviim and seven Nevios prophesied to Yisrael; and they did not detract from or add to that which is written in the Torah, except for instituting the mitzvah of reading the Megillah (on Purim).**

What did they expound (that prompted them to add this obligation)? **Rabbi Chiya bar Avin said in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah:** The prophets applied a “kal va’chomer”: **If the Jews** (leaving Mitzrayim) **who were delivered from slavery to freedom said a song** (Shiras HaYam), **then** shouldn’t we commemorate the deliverance **from death** at the hands of Achashveirosh and Haman **to life** with a public reading of the Megillah, **all the more so?!**

Thus, we can deduce that by fulfilling the mitzvah of Krias Megillah, which was instituted by Chazal based on a “kal va’chomer” of kedushah, we evoke the beneficial power of the name א”ל of kedushah. In this manner, we subdue the klipah

of **Amalek**, whose gematria equals א”ל אח”ר. That false god associated with the klipah opposes and battles the earth that expounded a “kal va’chomer” associated with the name א”ל of kedushah. It exerts all of its power to corrupt and inundate the land with its tumah by influencing people to expound fallacious “kal va’chomers.”

We now have cause to rejoice! For, we have achieved a better understanding of the wonderful “remez” we learned from the Chasam Sofer: The word מגול”ה is an acronym for ליהעביר—**to remove abominations from the land**. As he explained, by reading the Megillah, we subdue the klipah of Amalek. As we have learned, **Amalek** is the א”ל אח”ר—**the false god**—that fills the land with its abominations and false ideologies by means of improper, fallacious “kal va’chomers,” aimed at undermining the “kal va’chomer” of kedushah expounded by the earth. Nevertheless, by reading the Megillah, a practice established by Chazal based on a “kal va’chomer,” we fulfill the mitzvah of “mechias Amalek.” This is the allusion inherent in the name מגול”ה; it expunges the abominations and false gods in the world. More specifically, the reading of the Megillah **removes the false beliefs** associated with the klipah of Amalek **from the land (earth)** that expounded a “kal va’chomer” of kedushah.

In keeping with the theme of this essay, we can suggest that this was the rationale for beginning the Megillah with the word “ויהי” in the passuk: “ויהי בימי אחשורוש”. It is because the gematria of the word “ויהי” equals the name א”ל of kedushah. Thus, in the merit of reading the Megillah, a practice established by expounding a “kal va’chomer” of kedushah, we evoke the name א”ל to subdue the klipah of **Amalek**, the א”ל אח”ר. Furthermore, in the merit of reading the Megillah, we will merit eradicating the name of Amalek completely from existence and hasten the arrival of the complete geulah—swiftly in our times! Amen.

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