



The Amazing Connection between the Mitzvah of “Remembering Amalek” and the Purim Miracle

The Miracle of Purim Involved Hanging the Wicked Haman a Descendant of Amalek on the Tree He Prepared for Mordechai to Detach His Head from His Heart

The auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh is affectionately known as **Shabbas Zachor**. This indicates that on the Shabbas prior to Purim, in addition to reading the weekly parsha, we also read a portion related to the mitzvah of “zechirat Amalek” (Devarim 25, 17): “זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק”—**remember what Amalek did to you**. This is based on a teaching in the Mishnah (Megillah 29a) and Rashi’s comment: **That parshas Zachor should be read on the Shabbas adjacent to Purim to connect the obliteration of Amalek with the obliteration of Haman**.

Hence, it is fitting to establish the relationship between the mitzvah of “zechirat Amalek” and the miracle of Purim, which involved the downfall of Haman and all the other enemies of Yisrael descending from Amalek orchestrated by Mordechai and Esther HaMalkah. Let us begin by examining the mitzvas asei of “zechirat Amalek” (ibid.):

“זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים, אשר קרר 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!

It is imperative that every Jew understand the significance of the vital, sacred mitzvah of: “**Remember what Amalek did to you!**” What purpose and value does this mitzvah serve today? After all, we have no clue as to Amalek’s identity. Which nation are they? Furthermore, even if we were able to identify Amalek, what spiritual advantage would accrue to us today in galus from remembering them? After all, we do not possess the ability to physically wage war against them prior to the geulah; at present, in galus, we can only wage a spiritual war against them.

Haman’s Plan to Hang Mordechai Backfired Instead He and His Sons Were Hung on the Same Tree

The two days of Purim come right after Shabbas. In cities outside of Yerushalayim, Purim falls on Sunday, the 14th of Adar Sheini; in Yerushalayim, it falls on Monday, the 15th of Adar Sheini. Hence, I would like to focus on the central theme of the Purim miracle presented in Megillas Esther—someone being hung on the special tree prepared by Haman. It is a battle between the forces of kedushah of the people of Yisrael led by Mordechai and Esther versus the forces of tumah of the descendants of Amalek led by Haman and his advisors. The intrigue commences when the

Amalekites advise Haman to hang Mordechai on a tree (Esther 5, 14): **“ותאמר לו זרש אשתו וכל אוהביו יעשו עץ גבוה חמישים”**—**so his wife, Zeresh, as well as all his friends, said to him, “Let them make a gallows, fifty cubits high; and, in the morning, speak to the king and have them hang Mordechai on it.”**

Yet, after Esther and Mordechai instructed all of the Jews to assemble for three days of fasting and tefilah, they managed, due to Heaven’s chesed, to reverse the Amalekites’ plan. Instead, Haman was hung on the very same tree that he had prepared for Mordechai, as it is written (ibid. 7, 10): **“ויתלו את המון על העץ אשר הכין למרדכי”**. Here is the pertinent exposition in the Gemara (Megillah 16a): **“והמון בא לחצר בית המלך החיצונה לאמר למלך לתלות את מרדכי על העץ”**—**Haman came to the king’s outer courtyard to inform the king that he intended to hang Mordechai on the gallows that he had prepared “for him.”** The Gemara derives from the superfluous term **“לו”**—**for him**—that he had unwittingly prepared the gallows for himself. In other words, it was orchestrated from the very outset by HKB”H, the Grand Orchestrator, that Haman would prepare the gallows that he himself would be hung on.

Thus, it is evident that the hanging on these gallows occupied a major role in the battle between the forces of kedushah and the klipah of Amalek. For, on the 13th of Adar—the first day of the battle, when the Jews killed 500 enemies including Haman’s ten sons—Esther requested additional permission from Achashveirosh to hang the corpses of Haman’s ten sons on those gallows. Here is the pertinent passuk (ibid. 9, 13): **“ותאמר אסתר אם על המלך טוב ינתן גם מחר ליהודים אשר בשושן לעשות כדת היום, ואת עשרת בני המון יתלו על העץ, ויאמר המלך להיעשות כן ותינתן דת בשושן”**—**Esther replied, “If it pleases the king, let tomorrow also be given to the Jews who are in Shushan to act as they did today, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.”**

Now, it is incumbent upon us to comprehend and explain the essence of this historic conflict between Haman and his Amalekite cohorts and the forces of kedushah. Why was it so crucial to them to defeat the forces of kedushah by hanging Mordechai the Jew, the leader of Yisrael, on that tree? And what is the

significance of the fact that in the end Haman and his gons were actually hung on the tree that had been prepared for Mordechai?

“He happened upon you on the way” — Amalek Stands on the Path between the Head and the Heart

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing a precious insight from the impeccable teachings of the Chiddushei HaRim, zy”a, as brought down in the sefer Likutei HaRim (Ki Seitzei). He clarifies the meaning of “zechirat Amalek” alluded to in the passuk: **“Remember what Amalek did to you while you were departing from Egypt, how he happened upon you on the way.”** Here is a translation of his sacred comments:

The passuk says: **“How he happened upon you on the way etc.”** It is taught in the Midrash (Eichah Rabbah 2, 17): **“If you are told that there is “chochmah” among the goyim, believe it (the passuk Ovadiah 1, 8 is cited) . . . that there is Torah among the goyim, do not believe it (the passuk Eichah 2, 40 is cited).”** **Because “chochmah” is located in the brain; and it also exists among the goyim; however, Torah exists in the heart, this is exclusively the domain of Yisrael. Now, the connection between the brain and the heart is called the “way.” This is the meaning of the phrase “he happened upon you on the way”—the well-known “way” (path) from the brain to the heart. Amalek, “yimach shemo,” intended to create a interruption between the brain and the heart of Yisrael to eliminate the power of the Torah from Yisrael.**

We will expand on this sacred idea based on a dispute we find between David HaMelech and his son Shlomo. They differed as to whether “chochmah” is located in the brain or the heart. As the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni beginning of Mishlei) explains, this was the rationale of Shlomo HaMelech for opening sefer Mishlei with an enlarged **“mem”** in the passuk (Mishlei 1, 1): **“משלי”**—**שלמה בן דוד מלך בירושלים”**.

The Midrash states that Shlomo HaMelech sought the source and location of “chochmah,” wisdom. Rabbi

Eliezer holds that it is in the head; Rabbi Yehoshua holds that it is in the heart. Shlomo concluded that “chochmah” is located in the heart; whereas, his father, David HaMelech, was of the opinion that “chochmah” is located in the head. The sefarim they wrote reflect their respective viewpoints. David HaMelech began sefer Tehillim with the letter aleph—the beginning of the aleph-Beis—and concluded sefer Tehillim with the passuk (Tehillim 150, 6) “כל הנשמה תהלל י”ה”, the letters “chaf” and “lamed” (the word כָּל), which are directly in the middle of the aleph-Beis (ten letters before them and ten letters after them). This alludes to his opinion that wisdom is located in the head—like the letter “aleph” that is at the head of the aleph-Beis. Shlomo, on the other hand, began sefer Mishlei with the letter “mem” from the middle of the aleph-Beis and concluded with a passuk beginning with the last letter of the aleph-Beis, “tav.” Thus, he expressed his opinion that wisdom is located in the middle of the body, in the heart.

Now, it seems incredulous that the wisest of all men, Shlomo HaMelech, would purport that “chochmah” is in the heart and not the brain. After all, the heart is merely the center of the body’s circulatory system; blood is distributed from the heart to all the organs of the body. If a person sustains a brain injury, chas v’shalom, he can no longer produce words and thoughts of wisdom; whereas if he suffers from a heart condition, chas v’shalom, he is still able to utilize his brain and generate words of wisdom.

The Sword and the Book Came Down from Heaven Bound Together

To explain the matter, we will introduce what the esteemed Rabbi of Kozhiglov, ztz”l, presents in Eretz Tzvi (Shoftim) in the name of his mentor and Rav, the author of the Avnei Neizer, zy”a. In his own sacred way, he addresses our blessed sages’ statement in the Midrash (D.R. 4, 2): “הסייף והספר ירדו כרוכים מן השמים, אמר להם: אם תעשו מה שכתוב בספר הזה, אתם ניצולים מן הסייף הזה, ואם לא תעשו אתם—נהרגים בסייף הזה”—**the sword and the book came down from heaven bound together. He said to them: If you observe what is written in this book, you will be spared from this sword; if you do not, you will be killed by this sword.**

He explains the practical significance of this teaching. A person’s goal is to comprehend the teachings of the Torah with his brain. Having determined with the “chochmah” in his brain what actions are proper and which are improper, the brain must illuminate the way and influence the desire of the heart, so that it will exert its influence on all the bodily limbs to act properly. Thus, a person will perform only good deeds and refrain from performing improper, bad deeds. The yetzer hara, however, functions like a sword severing the head from the rest of the body. Thus, it separates and detaches the heart from the brain; this prevents the brain from illuminating and guiding the heart with its wisdom and intellect. As a consequence, the limbs are not guided to act properly.

To avoid this undesirable consequence, one should occupy oneself with the study of Torah. In the words of the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b), HKB”H says to Yisrael: “בני בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין, ואם אתם עוסקים בתורה אין אתם נמסרים בידו”—**My son, I created the yetzer hara, and I have created Torah as its antidote. If you engage in Torah-study, you will not be delivered into its hand.** For, when a person attains the wisdom of the Torah with the intelligence of his brain, he can apply the light of the Torah in his brain to exert a positive influence on the heart, which will then guide the rest of the bodily limbs to act solely in keeping with the precepts of the Torah.

This, then, is the meaning of the Midrash: “**The sword and the book came down from heaven bound together. He said to them: If you observe what is written in this book.**” In other words, you should study Torah, so that everything you do conforms with its teachings, then “**you will be spared from this sword**”—because the yetzer will be unable to detach the brain from the heart, since the illumination of the Torah in one’s brain will exert its influence on the heart. “**If you do not**”—however, if you fail to engage in Torah-study and do not abide by that which is written in the Torah—“**you will be killed by this sword**”—the yetzer will intercede and create a disconnect between the intelligence in one’s brain and the desire in one’s heart; that is tantamount to spiritual death. Without the light of the Torah in the brain, it is impossible to

control and exert a positive influence on the heart. This is the gist of his sacred words.

We can now begin to appreciate the bone of contention between David HaMelech and his son Shlomo as to whether “chochmah” resides in the head or in the heart. In truth, they are both correct, in keeping with the notion of “אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים”—**both are the words of the living G-d**, i.e., they are both consistent with and represent divine truth. Indeed, “chochmah” is located in the brain in a man’s head, in keeping with the viewpoint of David HaMelech. After all, all thoughts and intelligence come from there. Yet, Shlomo HaMelech, described as the wisest of all men, adds another dimension to this perception. The essential purpose of the “chochmah” that is located in the head is to exert a positive influence on the midos of the heart, so that the following ideal will become a reality: “מוח שליט על הלב”—**the brain is the ruler of the heart**. As such, a person will consistently abide by and perform the will of Hashem. In the words of Chazal (Berachos 17a): “מרגלא בפומיה דרבא, תכלית חכמה תשובה ומעשים טובים, שלא יהא אדם קורא ושונה ובוועט באביו ובאמו וברבו ובמי שהוא גדול ממנו בחכמה ובמנין, שנאמר ראשית חכמה יראת ה' שכל טוב לכל עושיהם, ללומדיהם.” **The following was a familiar lesson of Rava’s: The purpose of Torah wisdom is to lead to repentance and good deeds, so that a person does not read and learn and, yet kick at his father, his mother, or his teacher, or at anyone greater than him in wisdom and numbers. For it states (Tehillim 111, 10): “The beginning of wisdom is the fear of G-d, good understanding to all their practitioners.” It does not say to “their learners” but to “their practitioners.”**

In other words, if “chochmah” remains exclusively in the brain and is incapable of influencing the midos of the heart, it is not serving any useful purpose. This sort of isolated “chochmah” does not contribute to the service of Hashem. For, when a person wishes to perform the will of the brain to serve Hashem, he will be overwhelmed by animalistic urges from the heart, which will override the will of the brain. Thus, the converse will hold true—the heart will rule the brain. Therefore, Shlomo HaMelech opined that “chochmah” resides in the heart. In other words, the sole purpose and role of “chochmah” is to exert a positive influence

on a man’s heart, so that he will actually perform mitzvos, not just contemplate them.

Accordingly, the Yalkut Shimoni mentioned above proves its point magnificently—that Shlomo HaMelech’s viewpoint is that “chochmah” resides in the heart—by citing the passuk (Mishlei 10, 8): **חכם לב יקח מצוות—the wise of heart will seize mitzvos**. In other words, if “chochmah” remains exclusively in a person’s brain and lacks the ability to influence his actions for the good, it is not fulfilling its ideal purpose. This type of “chochmah” is of no value. True “chochmah” imparts the fervor and passion of kedushah to the heart. As a result of the brain’s constructive influence, the heart is anxious to serve Hashem and perform His mitzvos. In other words: **“The wise of heart will seize mitzvos.”**

“I said to myself . . . and my heart has discerned much wisdom and knowledge”

Based on this premise, we can suggest a beautiful interpretation of the Gemara’s (Succah 49b) elucidation of the words of Shlomo HaMelech (ibid. 31, 26): **פיה פתחה בחכמה ותורת חסד על לשונה, וכי יש תורה של חסד, ויש תורה שאינה של חסד... תורה ללמדה זו היא תורה של חסד, שלא ללמדה זו היא תורה שאינה של חסד.** The passuk in Mishlei employs the expression **“Toras chesed”**—literally: “Torah of kindness.” The Gemara questions the meaning and significance of this phrase. The first opinion defines **“Toras chesed”** as Torah that is pure in purpose—l’shma; a second opinion suggests that **“Toras chesed”** refers to Torah that is learned with the intention of passing it on to others.

In keeping with our current discussion, this means the following: When a man successfully illuminates his heart with the light of Torah from his brain, that is truly **“Toras chesed.”** The brain is teaching its Torah to “others”—in this case, the heart. If, however, he keeps his Torah in his brain and does not apply it constructively to subjugate the yetzer hara in his heart, this does not fulfill the criteria of **“Toras chesed,”** since it is not being taught to others.

This explains magnificently what Shlomo HaMelech himself said (Koheles 1, 16): **הנה אני חכם, ואני חכם על כל אשר היה לפני על ירושלים ולבי ראה הרבה חכמה הגדלתי והוספתי חכמה על כל אשר היה לפני על ירושלים ולבי ראה הרבה חכמה ודעתי.”** **I said to myself** (literally: **“I spoke with my**

heart”), “Here I have acquired great wisdom, more than any of my predecessors over Yerushalayim, and my heart has discerned (seen) much wisdom and knowledge.” They expounded in the Midrash (Koheles Rabbah 1, 36):

“I spoke with my heart.” The heart sees, as it is stated (at the end of this passuk): “My heart has seen much.” The heart hears, as it is stated (Melachim I 3,9): “May you grant your servant a hearing heart.” The heart speaks, as it is stated: “I spoke with my heart.” . . . The heart rejoices, as it is stated (Tehillim 16, 9): “For this reason my heart rejoices, and my soul is elated.” The heart cries out, as it is stated (Eichah 2, 18): “Their heart cried out to Hashem.” . . . The heart is broken, as it is stated (Tehillim 51, 19): “A heart broken and humbled.” The heart becomes conceited, as it is stated (Devarim 8, 14): “Your heart will become haughty.” . . . The heart stirs, as it is stated (Tehillim 45, 2): “My heart is astir with a good theme.” The heart plans, as it is stated (Mishlei 19, 21): “Many plans are in a man’s heart.” The heart desires, as it is stated (Tehillim 21, 3): “You have granted him his heart’s desire.”

This seems to concur marvelously with the viewpoint of Shlomo HaMelech that “chochmah” is located in the heart. As explained, the purpose and role of the “chochmah” in one’s brain is that it not remain dormant and isolated in a person’s head, but that it transcend the head until it reaches the heart and impresses on it to heed the voice of “chochmah.” This is the message conveyed by Shlomo HaMelech: “דברתי אני עם לבי לאמר . . .” “ולבי ראה הרבה חכמה”—everything that I perceived with my “chochmah,” I made sure that it had an impact on my heart and taught it the ways of “chochmah.”

We can now better appreciate the incredible insight of the Chiddushei HaRim. He explains the significance of phrase the Torah associates with klipat Amalek: “אשר קרך בדרך”—**how he happened upon you on the way**. Amalek is the negative influence that blocks the path that leads from the brain to the heart. Its aim is to prevent the brain’s “chochmah” from reaching the heart and exerting a positive influence on it. This then is the significance of the mitzvah

of “zechirat Amalek”: “זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים אשר קרך בדרך” . . . It comes to teach us that it is our sacred duty to overcome Amalek through the study of Torah, which portends the ability to rid oneself of all the negative influences of Amalek and to impact the heart positively in keeping with the notion of: “**And the Torah of chesed is on her tongue.**”

Eisav’s Head Is Buried in the Me’aras HaMachpeilah in the Merit of the Torah that He Learned from His Father Yitzchak

Upon further scrutiny, it is apparent that the klipah of Amalek depicted as “אשר קרך בדרך”—blocking the path between the head and the heart to prevent the “chochmah” from reaching the heart—was his legacy from his grandfather Eisav HaRasha. As chronicled in the Targum YoNasan (Bereishis 50, 13), Eisav attempted to prevent the shevatim from burying Yaakov in the Me’aras HaMachpeilah. Chushim ben Dan witnessed the fracas, picked up a sword, and lopped off Eisav’s head. His head rolled into the cave and came to rest in the lap of his father, Yitzchak. Notwithstanding, it seems odd that the head of such a rasha would merit being buried in the holy Me’aras HaMachpeilah.

Let us suggest an explanation based on the passuk (Bereishis 25, 27): “ויהי עשו איש יודע ציד”—**and Eisav became a man who knows trapping**. Rashi comments: **He knew how to trap and deceive his father with his mouth. He would ask him, “Father, how do we tithe salt and straw?” This led his father to believe that he was meticulous regarding mitzvos.** This implies that when Yitzchak asked Eisav to learn Torah with him—to fulfill the mitzvah of (Devarim 11, 19): “ולמדתם אותם את בניכם”—**and you shall teach them to your children**—Eisav acquiesced to his father’s request albeit reluctantly.

Hence, Eisav had a significant amount of Torah knowledge stored in his head that he had learned from his father. However, since he was a consummate rasha and had no intention of abiding by the precepts of the Torah, the Torah he learned remained in his head; none of it entered his heart. Therefore, HKB”H arranged for Chushim ben Dan to come and

decapitate Eisav with a sword. This can be viewed as an example of “midah k’neged midah”—measure for measure—since he had already detached his brain from his heart during his lifetime. So, when Eisav’s head rolled into the Me’aras HaMachpeilah and landed in Yitzchak’s lap, Yitzchak’s Torah that had been sequestered in Eisav’s head returned to its proper owner, to the source of kedushah.

With this understanding, it stands to reason that Amalek, Eisav’s grandson, inherited the negative trait, the klipah of “אשר קרך בדרך”, from his grandfather. He hampers every Jew by obstructing the path between the Jew’s brain and his heart, preventing the Jew’s Torah from reaching and guiding his heart. Nevertheless, the kedushah of the Torah is so great that anyone who studies it is capable of negating the power of Amalek. Occupying oneself with Torah keeps the conduit between the brain and heart open. Hence, the first letter of the Torah—the “beis” of בראשית—and the last letter of the Torah—the “lamed” of ישראל—form the word לב—heart. This conveys the fact that the goal of Torah-study is to have its accumulated knowledge and wisdom in the brain impact the heart.

Haman a Gilgul of Eisav Intended to Separate the Head from the Heart of Mordechai a Gilgul of Yaakov

Following this fascinating path, we will now explain the scheme of Haman and his cohorts, descendants of Amalek, to hang Mordechai on the gallows-tree. In the sefer Midbar Kedemos, the brilliant Chida presents a tremendous chiddush in the name of the Archei HaKinuyim, authored by the divine kabbalist Rabbi Moshe Zacuto, ztz”l. He explains why Mordechai refused adamantly to bow down to the wicked Haman

at the risk of sacrificing his life. Here is a translation of his sacred words:

Mordechai was a gilgul of Yaakov; and Haman was a gilgul of Eisav. Seeing as Yaakov inappropriately bowed down to Eisav seven times; therefore, Mordechai comes now and refuses to bow down to Haman, who is Eisav; thus, making amends for Yaakov’s wrongful act. This is why Mordechai placed all of Yisrael in such grave danger . . .

This enlightens us as to why it was so important to Haman and his fellow Amalekites to hang Mordechai on the tree. Mordechai HaTzaddik was one of leaders of the Sanhedrin who taught Torah to all of Yisrael, so that the Torah acquired in their heads would be transmitted to their hearts. Therefore, Haman and his cohorts—following in the footsteps of their ancestor Amalek “אשר קרך בדרך”, blocking the passage of “chochmah” from the brain to the heart—schemed to hang Mordechai on the gallows, separating his head from his body, to prevent the light of the Torah in his head from illuminating his heart.

However, their malicious scheme was foiled; HKB”H orchestrated the miracle of Purim whereby Haman was hung on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordechai. Thus, the klipah of Amalek— “אשר קרך בדרך”—was abolished. He could no longer obstruct the path between a Jew’s head and his heart. As a result, they fulfilled and accepted the Torah anew willingly. This then is our sacred avodah; we must eradicate the name of Amalek, preventing him from standing in the path between the head and the heart. If we accomplish this feat, the words of the Megillah will become a reality (Esther 8, 15): “ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר”—**the Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor.**

Our thanks and blessings are given to those who donated for the publication of our weekly dvar Torah for the merit of אהינו בני ישראל

Family Madeb - לעילוי נשמת
their dear mother
Lea bat Virgini ע”ה

Arthur & Randi Luxenberg לזכות
of their wonderfull parents, children and grandchildren
לעילוי נשמת His Father ר' יצחק יהודה בן ר' אברהם ע”ה

To receive the mamarim by email: mamarim@shvileipinchas.com