

# **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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## **ZACHOR**

This Shabbat, we read Parshat Zachor, "Remember what Amalek did to you..." (D'varim 25:17). The question that always arises is why must we still remember Amalek? Why is there a mitzva to remind ourselves of what Amalek did then?

Many discuss the idea of Amalek's actual existence in our time through direct descendants or through nations who hate the Jewish people just for whom they are. Many try to analyze their surrounding nations to see and judge if their character traits align with those infamous acts of Amalek of old. We try to beware of them and be wary of these foreign threats to our way of life.

Yet, another striking answer to this question may give us a better insight to why the mitzva of remembering Amalek is as essential to us as a people as well as on an individual basis. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein in his book *Darash Moshe*, felt that the point of this mitzva is to remind us now that it is possible for any human being to become as wicked as Amalek, in denying the existence of G-d even in the face of irrefutable evidence, even us. Just as Amalek

was purview to the miracle of crossing the Yam Suf as well as hearing all the other Exodus-related miracles by G-d, Amalek made an about face and ignored His presence. The Rabbis in the Midrash (Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Teitzei 9) compared Amalek to someone, seeing a bath of boiling water, which all others are afraid to touch, nonetheless leaped into it. Despite the fact that he himself badly scalded, he cooled the bath water to a degree where others could then also take the plunge of bathing in it.

Similarly, all the miracles G-d had done for the Israelites did not deter Amalek from attacking and showing others that they too can attack. Rabbi Feinstein's lesson goes even deeper. Any person, even us, no matter how great his spiritual accomplishments, must worry that he himself might be fooled into committing the most despicable sins, just as Amalek fell to such a low level, any one of us can equally fall. We learn from the mitzva of remembering Amalek that not only must we mistrust our ability to be persistent in our good practices but also, we must always be on the guard against faltering and doing wrongs.

The Gemara in Megila discusses how the catastrophe of Haman began specifically because of the Jews fraternizing with the foreign culture celebrating the destruction of the

**Jewish Temple, which Achashverosh had organized. All they wanted to do was to be part of the party and yet, were unaware of the meaning of their actions. The reading of Parshat Zachor is a warning not only of an outside threat but also rather of the one that comes from within. We are all made from the same flesh and blood and that is why we need to remember what an Amalek did to us to stand eternally vigilant and not to loosen our guard so that we will stand firm first on a personal level and then on a national level. It is we who need to be strengthened so we can celebrate the open as well as the hidden miracles of G-d before us. 🏰**