

THE THREAT OF AMALEK

AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

RABBI AVROHOM SHMIDMAN *DALED ADAR/MARCH 1, 2017*
SHIUR 438-PART 1

WE KNOW THAT IN THE STORY OF PURIM HAMAN REPRESENTS AMALEK AND IT IS A MITZVA INCUMBENT ON EVERY YID TO 'REMEMBER WHAT AMALEK DID TO US AND IT IS A MITZVA OF ERASING ANY REMINDER OF AMALEK'.

IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, WHEN WE ARE TOLD TO REMEMBER SOMETHING, WE REMEMBER WITH OUR MINDS, OUR HEARTS, BUT IN YIDDISHKEIT WHEN WE ARE TOLD TO REMEMBER, IT IS MORE THAN THAT. TO REMEMBER SOMETHING, IS TO VERBALIZE IT-IT HAS AN ORAL COMPONENT.

IN THE ASERES HADIBROS, WE ARE TOLD 'ZOCHOR AS YOM HASHABBOS'. WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO REMEMBER SHABBOS. HOW DO WE DO THIS? BY SAYING KIDDUSH ON THE WINE. JUST TO REMEMBER SHABBOS IN OUR HEART IS NOT ENOUGH, WE HAVE TO VERBALIZE IT.

THE KIDDUSH CONTAINS 2 COMPONENTS: SHESHESH YIMAI BERASHIS-6 DAYS OF CREATION AND YITZIYAS MITZRAIM. WHY ARE THESE THE TWO IDEAS IN THE KIDDISH OF SHABBOS?

THE 6 DAYS OF CREATION ARE A REALIZATION THAT HASHEM CREATED THE UNIVERSE. HASHEM IS THE G-D OF CREATION.

YITZIYAS MITZRAYIM-AT THAT TIME EVERYONE IN THE WORLD, ALL THE COUNTRIES REALIZED THAT NOT ONLY WAS HASHEM THE G-D THAT CREATED THE WORLD, BUT HE IS THE G-D THAT CONTINUES TO RUN THE WORLD EACH AND EVERY DAY. THIS WAS CLEAR TO JEWS AND GENTILES ALIKE.

WHEN A PERSON SAYS KIDDISH HE IS REMEMBERING THESE 2 COMPONENTS OF YIDDISHKEIT. AND IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL YIDDEN TO BE COGNIZANT OF THESE 2 DIMENSIONS OF YIDDISHKEIT.

RABBI YONASNA EIBISHITZ MADE A STUNNING OBSERVATION. AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FIRST BAIS HAMIKDATCH AND THE JEWS RETURNED TO ERETZ YISROEL AFTER 70 YEARS TO REBUILD THE 2ND BAIS HAMIKDTACH, MOST OF THE YIDDEN HAD INTERMARRIED. THIS IS A STARTLING FACT. THIS MEANS, THAT PEOPLE WHO WERE ALIVE

DURING THE FIRST BAIS HAMIKDTACH AND SAW THE NISSIM IN THE BAIS HAMIKDTACH WENT DOWN SO LOW IN MADREIGA THAT THEY AND THEIR CHILDREN INTERMARRIED. THIS IS STARTLING FOR THE FACT THAT SINCE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE 2ND BAIS HAMIKDTACH, WE HAVE BEEN IN SO MANY EXILES, WE HAVE LOST SO MANY YIDDEN, BUT YET WE HAVE BORUCH HASHEM INCREDIBLE SUCCESS -WE HAVE BEAUTIFUL TORAH FAMILIES, WE HAVE SHULS, YESHIVAS, BATEI MEDRASHIM.

HOW HAVE WE MANAGED TO HOLD ON TO OUR YIDDISHKEIT AND THAT FIRST GENERATION THAT WERE EXILED COULD NOT?

THE ANSWER IS THAT YIDDISHKEIT WAS VERY DIFFERENT THEN THAN IT IS NOW. THE ANSHEI KNESSETH HAGODOLA SAW WHAT HAPPENED AND MADE DRASTIC CHANGES THAT STAY WITH US TILL TODAY.

IN THE TIME OF THE BAIS HAMIKDTACH THERE WERE NO SHULS. IF YOU WANTED TO DAVEN, YOU CAME TO THE BAIS HAMIKDTACH.

THE ANSHEI KENESSETH HAGODALAH BUILT SHULS AND TAUGHT PEOPLE HOW TO DAVEN IN THEM. IN THE TIME OF THE BAIS HAMIKDTACH DAVENING WAS DIFFERENT. THERE WAS NO SHOMONEI ESRAI, NO KEDUSHA, NO CHAZORAS HASHAS (THE CHAZAN REPEATING THE SHOMONEI ESRAI) NO KADDISH. THEY ESTABLISHED THIS AND MORE.

THEY CHANGED THE CHARACTER OF SHABBOS AS WELL. FOR THE MOST PART THE YIDDEN WERE AN AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY, SO THE PEOPLE KNEW THEY WEREN'T ALLOWED TO PLANT, TO PLOW THEIR LAND ON SHABBOS. BUT WHAT DID THEY DO ON SHABBOS? THEY WOULD GO SHOPPING FOR EXAMPLE. THEY DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS WRONG TO DO SO.

THE ANSHEI HAKENESSETH HAGODOLA TAUGHT THE NATION HOW TO KEEP SHABBOS PROPERLY. AND WHEN WE KEEP SHABBOS PROPERLY, SHABBOS HAS THE ABILITY TO TRANSCEND THE CHALLENGES OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

AT THIS POINT, RABBI SHMIDMAN ASKED, IF HIS TOPIC IS AMALEK, WHY IS HE TALKING ABOUT SHABBOS?

WE KNOW WE HAVE A MITZVAH TO KILL AMALEK. THE PROBLEM IS FIRSTLY, WE DON'T REALLY KNOW WHO AMALEK IS TODAY AND SECONDLY WE WOULD BE PUTTING OUR LIVES IN DANGER IF WE WERE TO KILL ANYONE.

THE NAZIS DEFINITELY WERE AMALEK, AND RABBI SHMIDMAN BROUGHT 2 QUESTIONS FROM A RESPONSA FROM RAV EFRAIM OSHERI WHO LIVED IN KOVNO THROUGH THE HOLOCAUST. RAV OSHERI COMPILED MANY SEFORIM WITH THE QUESTIONS THAT THE YIDDEN HAD DURING THIS INFERNO THAT ARE REMARKABLE TO READ.

1. THERE WAS A CHOSID WHO LIVES IN THE GHETTO WHO NEVER ATE 'GEBROCHT' WHICH MEANT HE NEVER LET HIS MATZO GET WET. THIS CHOSID SAVED UP A LITTLE FLOUR TO BE ABLE TO BAKE A LITTLE MATZO EREV PESACH, WHICH IS A VERY BIG MITZVAH. AS HE WAS PREPARING THIS, A NAZI FOUND HIM AND ASKED HIM WHAT HE WAS DOING? HE ANSWERED, HE WAS PREPARING HIMSELF SOMETHING TO EAT. THE NAZI DIDN'T BELIEVE HIM AND BEAT HIM TO A PULP. ALL HIS TEETH WERE

KNOCKED OUT AND HE WAS BLEEDING FROM HEAD TO TOE. AFTER THE NAZI LEFT HIM AND HE RECOVERED HE WENT TO THE RAV'S HOUSE.

RAV OSHERI HEARS A KNOCK ON HIS DOOR AND HE GOES TO ANSWER THE DOOR. HE IS SHOCKED AT THE SIGHT THAT MEETS HIS EYE. A MAN IS STANDING THERE WITH BLOOD RUNNING DOWN HIS FACE, BLOOD STREAMING OUT OF HIS MOUTH. HE USHERS IN THE MAN AND ASKS HIM WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM. THE CHOSID TELLS HIM THE STORY AND THEN TELLS THE RAV THAT HE HAS A QUESTION:

'RABBI, MY WHOLE LIFE I WAS CAREFUL NOT TO EAT GEBROCH, BUT WHAT AM I TO DO TONIGHT? I HAVE NO TEETH LEFT IN MY MOUTH. IF I AM TO FULFIL THE MITZVAH OF EATING MATZOH TONIGHT, I WILL HAVE TO WET MY MATZOH. AM I ALLOWED TO DO SO?'

OF COURSE THE ANSWER IS YES, BUT WE SEE HEAR THE ABLITLY OF A YID TO CLING TO HIS EMUNA AND BITOCHON AT TIMES LIKE THIS.

2. A 2ND QUESTION RAV OSHERI BROUGHT DOWN: A MAN'S WIFE AND CHILDREN WERE KILLED BY THE NAZIS. AFTER THE WAR THERE WAS TIME OF BEDLAM IN EUROPE AND IT WAS POSSIBLE TO KILL NAZIS AND NOT GET INTO TROUBLE. THIS MAN CAME TO RAV OSHERI SAYING THAT HE KNOWS THE NAZI THAT KILLED HIS FAMILY, IS HE ALLOWED TO KILL HIM?

THE ANSWER WAS YES, HE WAS ALLOWED TO BECAUSE OF THE MITZVAH OF KILLING AMALEK, BUT THEN RAV OSHERI TOLD HIM, ONLY TO KILL THE NAZI IF HE KNOWS HE WILL BE ABLE TO RUN AWAY. THE MAN FOUND A GRENADE, THREW IT ONTO THE NAZI, KILLED HIM AND ESCAPED TO ERETZ YISROEL.

MI KAMACHO YISROEL-WHAT A NATION WE ARE THAT AT TIMES LIKE THESE, WE CAN HOLD ON TO OUR FAITH IN HASHEM.

ONE MITZVAH THAT EVERYONE KNOWS ABOUT IS SHABBOS ZOCHOR THAT ONE HAS TO HEAR THE READING OF 'REMEMBERING WHAT AMALEK DID TO US ' FROM THE SEFER TORAH. THIS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HEARING THE ASERES HADIBROS FROM THE SEFER TORAH.

WHAT IS IT THAT AMALEK STANDS FOR THAT WE NEED TO REMEMBER THEM? THEY ARE AN EVIL PEOPLE. BUT SAYS RAV SHMIDMAN, AMALEK IS NOT ONLY A NATION, THEY ARE 'A FORCE' AND THEY ARE A FORCE WE HAVE TO CONTEND WITH IN OUR LIFETIME. IN ADDITION, AMALEK IS LURKING IN OUR MIDST.

HOW CAN WE OVERCOME THE FORCE OF AMALEK, WHICH IS SO INSIDIOUS. HASHEM HIMSELF SAYS, " THE KISAH HAKOVOD IS NOT COMPLETE UNTIL AMALEK IS WIPED OUT.'

THE MAIN BASIS OF AMALEK IS FROM A POSUK IN MISHLEI:

'THE 'LAIZ' SCOFFER WILL BE HIT,AND THE FOOL WILL RISE UP'

THE MEDRASH EXPLAINS THIS POSUK: THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO YISRO. YISRO WAS THE FOOL WHO WAS UPLIFTED. WHY? BECAUSE HE SAW THE 'LAIZ' THE SCOFFER AND HE STRUCK HIM DOWN. WHO WAS THE 'LAIZ' WHO WAS THE SCOFFER? IT WAS AMALEK. WHAT DOES THE NATION OF AMALEK STAND FOR? SYNICISM AND SACARASIM. WHY? THERE ARE A NUMBER OF INTERPERATIONS TO THE POSUK WE READ IN PARSHAS ZOCHOR:

“Zachor Et Asher Asah Lecha Amalek BaDerech Betzetchem MiMitzrayim”

“Remember what Amalek did to you on your way out of Egypt! (Devarim 25)”

ASHER KORCHO B'DERECH'HOW HE HAPPENED UPON YOU ON THE WAY.

1. KORCHO-HAPPENED BY CHANCE
2. KORCHO-FROM THE ROOT WORD KARI WHICH MEANS IMPURE. THE AMALEKIM HAD SUCH TERRIBLE VALUES THAT THEM BROUGHT IMMORALITY INTO KLAL YISROEL.
3. KORCHO-KAR-COLD. BNEI YISROEL WERE UNTOUCHABLE AFTER THE MAKKOS AND YITZIAS MITZRAIM. EVEVERY NATION KNEW THAT THE JEWISH G-D PROTECTS HIS NATION. THEY WERE UNTOUCHABLE. BUT AMALEK KORCHO BY DERECH-THEY SHOWED THEY HAD NO FEAR AND THEY COOLED EVERYONE ELSE DOWN.

RABBI SHMIDMAN WENT ON TO EXPLAIN HOW UNBELIEVABLE THE MAKKOS (PLAGUES) WERE. THEY CAME TO SHOW THE WORLD THAT HASHEM CONTROLS EVERYTHING.

THE MAHARAL EXPLAINS: THE FIRST MAKKAH-DAM-BLOOD-WAS SUBTERRAINENAN-UNDER THE WATER. TO SHOW THAT HASHEM CONTROLS WHAT IS BELOW THE GROUND.

2ND MAKKAH-TZIFARDA-FROGS-AMPHIBIANS-CAN LIVE ON THE GROUND AND IN THE WATER. HASHEM CONTROLS BOTH OF THESE AS WELL.

3RD MAKKAH-KINIM-LICE-COME FROM UNDERNEATH THE GROUND

4TH MAKKAH-ARAVE-WILD BEASTS-ON TOP OF THE GROUND AND SO IT CONTINUES UNTIL MAKKAS BECHOROS-DIVINE SELECTION-ONLY HASHEM CAN CHOOSE WHO TO KILL SO EXACTLY

ALL THIS TO SHOW THE YIDDEN AND THE EGYPTIANS THAT HASHEM CONTROLS ALL ASPECTS OF OUR LIVES. AND THIS MESSAGE THE WHOLE WOLRD HEARD.

ANY NATION WOULD BE FOOLISH TO START UP WITH THE YIDDEN. SO WHY DID AMALEK START UP? BECAUSE THEY ARE 'LAZE' THEY ARE SCOFFERS, THEY ARE CYNICS. THEY DON'T BELIEVE IN ANYTHING AND MAKE FUN OF WHAT OTHERS BELIEVE.

AMALEK SAID ABOUT THE YIDDEN, THEY SEEMED HOT TODAY-UNTOUCHABLE, BUT OUR MOTTO IS , ' HERE TODAY GONE TOMORROW' SO WE WILL ATTACK THEM.

YISRO SAW ALL THIS AND HE DID NOT RESPOND WITH IGNORANCE. HE DID NOT TURN AWAY FROM IT. HE DID NOT BECOME LIKE THEM AND BECOME CYNICAL.

THIS IS THE MESSAGE WE HAVE TO LEARN. NOT TO BECOME SARCASTIC OR CYNICAL. LIFE IS FULL OF CHALLENGES, IT IS EASY TO GIVE UP, IT IS EASY TO SAY, 'WHATEVER WILL BE, WILL BE'/WHY SHOULD WE PUT OUR EFFORTS INTO....NOT WORTH IT. PEOPLE CAN GET FRUSTRATED AND DEPRESSED FROM THE CHALLENGES. BUT A YID HAS TO HOLD ONTO TO HIS EMUNA.

RABBI SHMIDMAN BROUGHT A POWERFUL STORY FROM RAV SHMUEL FALKGENFELD TO ILLUSTRATE HIS POINT. THIS RAV LIVED IN THE 1700'S. HE WRITES IN HIS INTRODUCTION, THAT HE NEVER UNDERSTOOD THE GEMARA THAT EXPLAINED, WHAT IT MEANS IN SHEMA WHEN WE SAY, 'V'AHAVTO B'CHOL L'VOVACHO..U'VCHOL NAFSHECNO' WITH YOUR SOUL. RABBI AKIVA EXPLAINS THAT EVEN WHEN ONE HAS TO GIVE UP HIS SOUL FOR HASHEM HE SHOULD STILL BELIEVE AND LOVE HASHEM.

RAV FALKGENFELD NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHAT THIS MEANT. IF A YID HAS TO DIE ON KIDDISH HASHEM, HE WILL DO SO AND HE WILL DO WILLINGLY AND OF COURSE HE WILL LOVE HASHEM.

BUT THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED IN RAV FALKGENFELD'S LIFE THAT HELPED HIM UNDERSTAND THIS POSUK BETTER.

IN 1797 A FIRE RAGED THROUGH THE TOWN OF TARNOPOL. IN THOSE TIMES THERE WAS NO FIRE DEPARTMENT AND THE HOUSES ALL BURNED DOWN. THE RAV'S HOUSE BURNED DOWN WITH THOUSANDS OF HIS HANDWRITTEN MANUSCRIPTS CONTAINING ORIGINAL TORAH THOUGHTS BECOMING ASHES IN A FEW MINUTES. HIS LIFE-TIME WORK SHATTERED.

THIS SHATTERED THE RAV AS WELL. HE HAD TO MOVE OUT OF TOWN AND HE WENT TO LIVE IN POSEN. HE BECAME DEPRESSED.EVENTUALLY HE GOT HOLD OF HIMSELF AND STARTED TO WRITE NEW CHIDDUSHE TORAH.

AND THEN HE WROTE, THAT HE NOW UNDERSTANDS WHAT 'B'CHOL NAFESHCO' MEANS, IT DOESN'T MEAN 'IF YOU DIE ON KIDDISH HASHEM' BUT RATHER IF YOU TRY YOUR BEST TO SERVE HASHEM-THROUGH RAISING YOUR CHILDREN, THROUGH MAKING PARNASA AND IT IS ALL TAKEN AWAY FROM YOU, AND YOU ARE NOT SUCCESSFUL, YOU'RE CHILDREN GO OFF THE DERECH CHAS V'SHALOM, WHATEVER YOU TOUCH AS FAR AS PARNASA GOES, FAILS,YOU FEEL LIKE SOMEONE PUNCHED YOU IN THE FACE, YET YOU STILL HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO LOVE HASHEM 'B'CHOL NAFSHECHO'.

ONE CANNOT BECOME LIKE AMALEK, BECOME A 'LAZE' A CYNIC. RATHER , A PERSON HAS TO HOLD ON TO HIS EMUNA.

THERE ARE COUNTLESS STORIES OF YIDDEN WHEN FACED WITH DIFFICULT, LIFE THREATING CHALLENGES, HELD ONTO THEIR EMUNA AND DIDN'T WAVER.

RABBI SHMIDMAN TOLD US SOME UNBELIEVABLE STORIES TO ILLUSTRATE THIS POINT.

THERE WAS A MAN CALLED SHIMON WHO BENTCHED WITH UNBELIEVABLE KAVANA-CONCENTRATION. A MAN ASKED HIM, 'WHY HE BENTCHED THIS WAY, NEVER SAW ANYONE ELSE DO THIS.' HE ANSWERED THE FOLLOWING:

WHEN HE WAS A YOUNG BOY, HIS REBBE TOLD THE CLASS THAT THEY WERE GOING TO HAVE A SPECIAL VISITOR THAT DAY-THE FAMOUS RAV MOSHE SHAPIRO FROM CHACHMEI LUBLIN WHO CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF THE DAF YOMI. THE CHILDREN WERE SO EXCITED.

RAV MOSHE SHAPIRO CAME TO THE CHEDER AND TESTED THE BOYS ON THEIR GEMARA KNOWLEDGE. HE WAS VERY PLEASED WITH THE BOYS. HE GAVE THEM A BROCHA. HE TOLD THEM THAT IF THEY BENTCHED WITH CONCENTRATION EVERY DAY, THEN THEY WOULD NEVER LACK FOR FOOD.

THIS WAS A NOVEL THOUGHT TO THE YOUNG SHIMON. IN THOSE TIMES, THERE WAS HARDLY ENOUGH FOOD TO EAT, MOST PEOPLE WENT HUNGRY. BUT EVEN AT THAT YOUNG AGE HE TOOK IT UPON HIMSELF TO BENTSCH WITH KAVANA. THE WAR YEARS CAME AND AT THE AGE OF 11 HE FOUND HIMSELF IN FRONT OF MENKELE THE ROSHO. HE HAD NO IDEA WHAT HE WAS SUPPOSED TO DO-GO RIGHT, GO LEFT. HE WAS ALONE. A MAN SAW HIM AND SAID TO HIM, 'WHEN YOU GET IN FRONT OF MENGELE, TELL HIM YOU ARE A COOK'. SHIMON SAID, 'BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW TO COOK'. THE MAN ANSWERED, 'DON'T WORRY, I WILL TEACH YOU.' AND THIS IS WHAT HE DID. HE TOLD MENEGELE THAT HE WAS A VERY ACCOMPLISHED COOK. HE WAS TALL, SO MENEGELE DID NOT REALIZE HE WAS BUT A YOUNG LAD OF 11 AND SENT HIM TO THE RIGHT. THEY SENT THIS BOY TO THE KITCHEN WHERE THE OLDER JEW HELPED HIM. HE MADE SURE EVEN IN THAT INFERNO, TO TRY TO WASH AND BENTSCH EVERY DAY AND OF COURSE HE CONTINUED TO BENTSCH WITH GREAT KAVANA.

ONE DAY A NAZI COMES INTO THE KITCHEN AND DRAGS HIM OUT. HE TAKES HIM TO THE END OF THE CAMP, HANDS HIM A SHOVEL AND SHOUTS AT HIM: DIRTY JEW, I AM GIVING YOU 3 HOURS TO DIG ME A DITCH 2 METERS DEEP.WHEN I COME BACK IN 3 HOURS, IF THE DITCH IS HERE, YOU WILL BE SAVED AND YOU CAN RETURN TO THE KITCHEN, IF NOT, I WILL SHOOT YOU ON THE SPOT.' AND WITH THAT THE NAZI TURNED AND LEFT.

SHIMON PICKED UP THE SHOVEL AND TRIED TO DIG. THE EARTH WAS HARD. THERE WAS NO WAY HE WOULD BE ABLE TO DIG A 2 METER DITCH IN 3 HOURS. HE STARTS TO CRY AND DAVEN TO HASHEM TO HELP HIM.

AN OPEN TRUCK OF POLES COMES BY. THEY SEE SHIMON STANDING THERE WITH A SHOVEL IN HIS HAND. THEY START THROWING INSULTS AND CURSES ON HIM. AND THEY START THROWING THINGS AT HIM. HE HAS TO COVER HIS FACE WITH HIS HANDS TO PROTECT HIMSELF. WHEN THEY LEAVE AND HE OPENS HIS EYES, HE SEES THE GROUND FULL OF VEGETABLES-POTATOES, CARROTS, SQUASH ETC.

TWO MINUTES LATER, ANOTHER TRUCK OF POLES COMES BY. THEY WERE COMING INTO THE CAMP AFTER A DAY OF HARD LABOR. THEY WERE THE DIGGERS. THEY ALL HAD DIGGING EQUIPMENT WITH THEM. THEY SAW THE FRESH VEGETABLES AND THEY ASKED SHIMON IF THEY COULD HAVE SOME OF HIS VEGETABLES.

HE SAW THEIR DIGGING EQUIPMENT AND HE QUICKLY TOLD THEM: 'IF YOU DIG ME A DITCH 2 METERS DEEP, YOU CAN HAVE ALL THE VEGETABLES.'

WITHIN A FEW MINUTES, THE DITCH WAS DUG. AND SHIMON GLADLY GAVE THEM ALL HIS VEGETABLES.

SHORTLY AFTER THIS, THE NAZI BEAST RETURNED. OF COURSE, HE WAS SCHOCKED TO SEE THE DITCH DUG. HE TOLD SHIMON, HE WAS A MAN OF HIS WORD AND HE WOULD RETURN SHIMON TO THE KITCHEN AND THEN HE SAID, 'ONE THING I KNOW FOR SURE, IS THAT YOUR G-D WATCHES OVER HIS PEOPLE.'

RABBI SHMIDMAN CONCLUDED THE FIRST PART OF HIS SHIUR, THAT WE ALL HAVE CHALLENGES BUT WE CAN NOT LET OUR CHALLENGES TURNED US INTO CYNICS AND WE CANNOT ASK OURSELVES, WHY ISN'T HASHEM HELPING ME IN THE WAY I WANT TO BE HELPED. THIS IS HOW AMALEK TALKS, NOT THE WAY A YID TALKS.

IF WE THINK LIKE THIS, WE CAN TRULY ELIMINATE AMALEK AND CELEBRATE AS THE YIDDEN DID IN PERSIA, B'SOSSON U'V'SIMCHA