

# Spirituality

TORAH PORTION

## Amalek's Evil Cry Is All Around Us

Parshat Tzav: *Leviticus 6:1-8:36; Jeremiah 7:21-8:3, 9:22-9:23.*

**T**his Shabbat, Shabbat Zachor — the Shabbat of Remembrance — we take two Torah scrolls out of the ark during the morning service. From the first scroll we read the weekly Torah portion; from the second scroll we read about two eternal obligations:

1. To remember what Amalek attempted to do to our ancestors when they left Egypt, and

2. to obliterate Amalek.

What was it that Amalek wanted to do? When the Jewish people left Egypt, they were protected from the Egyptian army by God's open miracles. It was apparent to all the nations in the vicinity that the Jews were God's people, and none would start up with a nation that benefited from such Divine protection.

None — except for the nation of Amalek. Knowing very well that the probability of victory in battle was remote, they attacked the nascent Jewish nation anyway. And, indeed, they lost the battle when the Almighty interceded on behalf of the Jews.

What motivated Amalek to get involved in such a foolhardy war? Our sages explain that Amalek was the first nation in world history to be motivated by simple crass, illogical anti-Semitism. They knew that they didn't stand a chance against the Jewish people, yet their blind hatred propelled them into something that they would pay for dearly. It is this irrational, unreasonable hatred that we remember on Shabbat Zachor, and that we are commanded to utterly erase.

We have recently seen revolutions taking place in many Arab countries.

For decades, tens of millions of Arabs have been oppressed by dictators who have abused their people in almost every way possible. This was public knowledge to anyone who took the interest and made the effort to find

out what was happening on the Arab street. Yet for years, assorted world agencies, the media and the international community in general have demonized only Israel for alleged human rights violations against Arabs.

This vogue of condemning Israel is rampant on our own college campuses. It's a funny thing. You constantly hear of college students demanding from their university boards to divest

from Israel; but I don't remember ever hearing of demands to divest from Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and other Arab countries where the standard of living is much lower than that of Arabs who live on the West Bank and whose citizens have far less freedom and far fewer

rights than do their counterparts in Israel.

What is the reason for the obvious hypocrisy?

It's called Amalek. It's called illogical, irrational, vintage anti-Semitism.

We don't know who Amalek is today, but the mitzvah to obliterate what they stood for remains.

This Shabbat we rededicate ourselves to obliterate Amalek's ugly message by becoming ambassadors of Israel and Judaism and by expressing our outrage over the blatant hypocrisy demonstrated by the enemies of Israel. □

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Rabbi  
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