

This week, we read Parshas Zachor. It is an interesting mitzvah because Amolek attacked Klal Yisroel 3500 years ago. Yet it is a mitzvas asei to remember what Amolek did to us for all generations. The verses at the end of Parshas Beshalach say Hashem's struggle against Amolek will go on and on till the end of human history.

But there is a problem: who is Amolek today. Where are their descendants? Even if I could track down their descendants, would I really have to kill someone who may have nothing to do with hurting Jews today – simply because of who his great-great-great grandfather was? What does he have to do with what his ancestors did 3500 years ago?

Rav Chaim explained that there are two definitions of Amolek. One is their biological descendants, and the other includes any nation which adopts the philosophy of Amolek. What is that philosophy? The posuk in Tehillim says it is those who make it their mission to destroy the Jewish people and erase their impact on the world. We mention in the Haggodoh that in every generation there are people who rise up against us to wipe us out. In the previous century, it was Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, and later Yasser Arafat. Today it is the government of Iran and all sorts of people all over the world.

It is a very interesting phenomenon – there have always been people throughout history who have singled us out and tried to destroy us. Why?

It is because there is an ideal we represent to the world. We are a mamleches kohanim ve'goy kodosh. We represent the idea that there is such a thing as spirituality and spiritual values. The goal of this world is something beyond this world. The human being is not just a physical animal. What is the attraction of the idea of Evolution? Which intelligent person could believe such stupidity and how did it take over the world? The attraction comes from the fact that it allows people to live their lives as animals. It frees people from taking responsibility for their actions.

It is interesting to note – who are the leaders of all the animal rights movements? They are either vicious anti-Semites or famous stars in the entertainment world. Their whole approach to life is to live like animals. They feel a great affinity to the animal world because they basically identify as just another type of developed animal. We represent a different idea. We have a neshomo. We are not animals. So they resent us.

Look at a map of the ancient world and you will notice that Amolek came a great distance to attack Klal Yisroel. Amolek were in no way physically threatened by Klal Yisroel. So why did they come? We posed a direct and immediate threat to their whole philosophy of life. We represented a dangerous idea – that human beings have a neshomo and are not animals.

Amolek attacked us right after Egypt was utterly defeated. The posuk in Oz Yoshir testifies that all the surrounding nations were in a state of fear and panic after kriyas Yam Suf. Amolek shattered that awe and fear when they attacked us. How? By showing that Klal Yisroel – who represent Hashem's hashgochah of reward and punishment – could be attacked. Amolek lacked any fear of Hashem and wanted to prove Klal Yisroel were not invincible. Another explanation is that Klal Yisroel themselves neglected Torah learning and were at a lower level of fear of Hashem, and became exposed to attack.

There will always be a group of people who view the human being as an animal and therefore see Klal Yisroel as a threat to that belief and must be eliminated.

When Hashem sent Shmuel Hanovi to command Shaul Hamelech to attack Amolek, He emphasized that Amolek had to be completely destroyed – total annihilation of the entire population and their belongings. Shaul protested the apparent cruelty of killing all men, women and children. What indeed is the reason for this command?

There is an interesting Midrash which says that when the mabul came to destroy the dor hamabul, Hashem gave it the power of total destruction – not even a plow remained – no artifacts no traces of their evil civilization were allowed to endure. Why? It is because people have a perverse fascination with evil. Evil produces a culture. Unless you uproot that culture totally, it has the capacity to regrow and regenerate itself. From time to time, you read about auctions selling off the possessions of famously evil people – Hitler's automobile, etc. These items fetch a high price. Why? It is because people are fascinated by evil. Any traces of an evil culture which is allowed to remain, creates the danger that it will be rediscovered and revived by later generations. It must be totally annihilated.

Shaul didn't think it was proper. He thought it was cruel. He left the king of Amolek alive. Shaul Hamelech was a tzaddik and exceedingly humble. Agog was a powerful king of a powerful nation. Shaul felt he needed to treat Agog with respect. The people felt sorry for him and had pity on the best animals. They didn't want to destroy everything. So Hashem told Shmuel He changed His mind and Shaul cannot be king of Klal Yisroel anymore.

When Shmuel confronted Shaul, Shaul professed he did everything he was supposed to do. He denied he did anything wrong. "But what is the sound of the animals I hear?" Shmuel asked. "Those are the best animals we saved for korbonos." Shaul responded. Then Shmuel delivered to Shaul a powerful message. Even though you seem small in your own eyes and you are confronting a powerful king, you as the king of Klal Yisroel represent Hashem to the rest of the world. This is true about every Jew. There is no room for feelings of inferiority in the face of non-Jews.

Many years ago, the Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, had an audience with the Pope. She remarked to those who were escorting her how impressed she was. She, with such humble beginnings as the daughter of a poor carpenter, was meeting the Pope of Rome! But she failed to realize that – for better or for worse – she is representing the Jewish people to the head of the biggest avodo zoro in the world. There is no room for feelings of inferiority in such a situation.

This State of Israel is a very sick country. They are confused with who they are and what they represent. They currently have a lockdown with no one coming in or out of the country. Certainly not foreigners! But the government had a dilemma. Israel prides itself on being a world center – the meeting point for all kinds of international conferences and tournaments. Israel was supposed to host a major international wrestling competition – on par with the World Cup in soccer. They were supposed to host 600 participants with their families! So they made an exception for them – because this is what Israel takes pride in. It overrides everything – even though they are fighting the biggest wave of a deadly pandemic.

Then Shmuel told Shaul: Hashem doesn't care about your korbonos

if you are using them to disobey Him. He would rather you listen to Him than offer all the fat of the animals you want to bring. Then Shmuel says this rebellion is on par with avodo zoro. Why? Because you despised the word of Hashem!

Why is this message so significant for us?

Shaul was told to kill Amolek and Shaul refused because it went against his personal moral sense. Hashem responded that your moral sense is simply wrong. Hashem created the physical laws of the universe and the moral laws of the universe. Hashem created that innate sense of right and wrong that all healthy human beings have, and He has the authority to override this sense. You can't judge Hashem's morality with the moral sense that He Himself created in you. Elevating your own moral sense as being superior in order to judge Hashem is a form of avodo zoro because you are declaring that Hashem is not absolute. Avodo zoro means thinking there are other powers on par with Hashem. There is nothing on par with Hashem – either physical or moral.

When Shaul had pity on Agog, a bas kol called out: "don't be overly righteous." Chazal have a rule: those who are merciful to the cruel, will eventually be cruel to the merciful. When Shaul wiped out the kohanim of the city of Nov in pursuit of Dovid, the bas kol this time rang out: "don't be overly wicked." Once you leave it up to yourself to decide what is good and bad, you are subject to all the weaknesses and whims of human feelings. There is no absolute standard that is in control, and you are capable of every immoral act in the name of your personal morality.

Hashem gave us an absolute system of rules and He defines what is right and wrong. When you go on your own, you can spare a vicious murderer like Agog, and kill innocent kohanim.

In the end, Shmuel summoned Agog and executed him publically after declaring "just as you murdered others and caused mothers to be bereft of their children, you will be killed and your mother will be bereft."

We learn many valuable lessons from this incident.

Agog was the head of a murderous nation. He represented the philosophy of Amolek. They lived by the power of the sword. This is the opposite of the philosophy of Klal Yisroel. We look only to the Torah to tell us how to deal with evil. We don't follow our own moral instincts – only what Hashem demands. It doesn't only apply to non-

Jews. Even a Jewish city which has been overridden by avodo zoro has to be completely uprooted with no traces of it allowed to remain. This is why everything had to be eliminated from the dor hamabul. This is why there is no archeological evidence of the dor hamabul – at least none were found by the generations immediately afterward. Not even a plow.

Why? Because evil has a perverse attraction and it will regenerate itself. We have to uproot Amolek completely – leave no traces of their evil culture. And even if it may seem cruel by your limited view, it is an act of kindness to protect the rest of the world from evil.

Shaul let Agog live and kept him in a prison overnight. Agog managed to impregnate a woman that night, and she had a descendant – Homon ho'Agogi. We say in the piyut on Purim that the mercy of Shaul gave rise to the enemy. He felt pity on Agog and it produced a Homon. We need to learn to trust Hashem's infinite wisdom to run the world in the best possible way. We have a very narrow view of what's happening.

Over this summer we saw how the liberal notion of morality in America went to absolute absurd extremes. In their complete stupidity, they openly advocated defunding the police – abolishing the police. The BLM protests started in Minneapolis. Now we hear that the crime rate has skyrocketed so high in Minneapolis that they started to increase funding to recruit more police. They see with their eyes backwards – not forwards. When you want to design your morality according to your own feelings and instincts, you wind up destroying the world.

Hashem set up a system of right and wrong. We try to understand Hashem's morality as best we can. But when you ignore Hashem's morality and think you know better, society will break down very fast.

We are commanded to remember what Amolek did to us and learn these lessons for the end of history. Because we represent Hashem in this world and it is a fact that in every generation there are people who think our mission poses a deep threat to their philosophy of life and they want to destroy us.

Idi Amin was the brutal dictator of Uganda 40 years ago. He was a wild animal and virulent anti-Semite. He even cannibalized his enemies after he killed them! What was his hatred of Jews based on – sitting in the middle of the African continent far from Israel? A wild animal cannot tolerate a people who represents morality and spirituality. We are dangerous. We took the responsibility of representing Hashem in this world – with all the dangers it entails. And we need to remember that this is our mission wherever we go.