

Parsha Ponders

Tetzaveh/Zachor | Mar 6, 2025 | 6 Adar 5785

The generational battle¹

ויאמר כי-יד על-כס קה מלחמה ליקוק בעמלק מדר דר

[Hashem] said: "The hand is on the throne of G-d, a war for Hashem against Amalek, for all generations"²

Parshas Zachor is our yearly obligation to publicly remember what Amalek did to us. They attacked us as we left Egypt. Still, it begs the question: What was so bad about their sin? G-d Himself declares that there will be a battle for all generations against Amalek. Sure, they hated the Jews. But antisemitism has always been around. Why is Amalek treated differently than any other nation or people who attacked us? We are told that Amalek didn't fear Hashem³, but that still requires explanation.

In the laws of theft, the Torah treats the thief harsher than the burglar⁴. A thief has to pay back double what they stole, and yet a burglar simply returns what they stole. What's the difference? A burglar is an armed robber who brazenly takes what they want. They don't fear Man just like they don't fear their G-d. However, a thief steals in stealth. They sneak in to take what they want. They are afraid of Man, yet they aren't afraid of G-d. The thief shows more concern for the servant than for the master, so they have to pay double.

If one would ask us, we would have said the opposite. The brazen robber should be dealt with more harshly. However, if we think about it, we'll uncover the principle at work here. The burglar doesn't make any calculations. They just take without thought. This is very unlike the thief. The thief makes all kinds of calculations, efforts, thoughts, and plans not to get caught. They have zero concern about what Hashem thinks about what their doing. They're so preoccupied in their thoughts that Hashem isn't in the picture at all. This is worthy of more punishment.

What was unique about Amalek, as opposed to any other nation? Antisemitism usually comes without much premeditation. Those that hate the Jews will just act on their instinct. This is not like Amalek. We are told that they specifically attacked us when we were weak from our journeys in the wilderness. They calculated the exact right time to surprise attack us, in an effort to eradicate us⁵. They were so involved in their thoughts, yet they didn't for a second consider what did Hashem think about all this. That makes sense, for we are told that they didn't fear Hashem. As a direct result of their arrogance, Hashem declared war against Amalek for all generations.

Good Shabbos

¹ Based on Chiddushei HaGriz Ki Seitzei § 152

² Exodus 17:16

³ Deuteronomy 25:18

⁴ Bava Kamma 79a

⁵ Perhaps this could be a reason why it said that the Nazis, may their names be erased, are the spiritual heirs of Amalek