

Torah: Ex. 27:20-20:30
Haftarah: (Ezekiel 43:10-27)
Brit Chadashah: Heb. 13:10-16(17)
 Parasha Zachor: Deut. 25:17-19 (Haftarah: I Sam. 15:2-34)

On this Shabbat, it is traditional to remember the attack of the Amalekites, since the one who organized the attempted genocide against the Jewish people is believed to be a descendent of the Amalekites. The special haftarah portion deals with the partial slaughter of the remaining Amalekites under Saul, whose failure to eradicate this enemy may have been one of the reasons descendents of this people survived to trouble Israel in subsequent generations.

Three issues derive from this custom. The first issue concerns the troubling concept of generational warfare (Ex. 17:16), which called for the eradication of an entire people. The second deals with the issue of obedience, which is G-d's eyes, is more worthwhile than the performance of any ritual. In other words, symbolic repetition has its place, as a kind of tactile teaching device to remind us of the truths of G-d's Word. If, however, this kind of ritual obedience is not reflected in a literal obedience to the moral imperatives of the Word, then this lack of reality in how we conduct our daily lives cannot be compensated for by any ritual behaviour. You cannot use ritual to replace reality, because ritual is only a reminder of spiritual truths, while obedience is the actual integration of these truths into the daily fabric of our lives.

The third issue deals with remembrance and why it is so important to remember the past. In the Complete ArtScroll Siddur, six remembrances are included in the ritual for the weekday morning service and I want to use these as the basis for my Torah Meditation and I will also remember to comment on the first issue I mentioned. But first a little caveat or explanation of why I am proceeding this way and not following the prescribed ritual patterns for this day, and indeed for the celebration of Purim.

We are a Messianic Congregation of Jews and Gentiles who face tradition with both freedom and respect. Freedom, because we understand that all traditional observances are generational applications of spiritual truth to certain historical, cultural settings, and that we need to apply these same truths in our own cultural, historical setting with at least as much creativity and wisdom as those who first set up and standardized their rituals. Respect because we are able to understand and to modify these traditional observances only because previous generations were careful to pass them on to us and teach us that we, too, have to pass them on to our children's children until the Kingdom comes.

So, we do not observe in a traditional manner, but attempt in all that we do to faithfully reflect the original purpose for which these ceremonies were designed. Let us begin with the six remembrances, which we do not repeat every day, but which it has been our tradition to recite on this, the last Shabbat before Purim, as we continue the countdown to Pesach. Let's rise for the recitation of the six remembrances plus one which reflects our Messianic perspective.

1 **Remember** the Exodus from Egypt (Deut. 16:3): *That you may remember the day of your departure from Egypt all the days of your life.*

2 **Remember** the Receiving the Torah At Mount Sinai (Deut. 4:9-10): *Only beware and guard yourself carefully, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen and lest they stray from your heart all the days of your life. And you are to make them known to your children and to your children's children – the day you stood before The L-rd your G-d, at Sinai.*

3 **Remember** Amalek's Attack (Deut. 25:19-25): *Remember what Amalek did to you on the way, as you departed from Egypt. How he encountered you on the way and count down weak ones trailing behind you, while you were faint and exhausted, and he did not fear G-d. It shall be that when the L-rd your G-d, lets you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land that the L-rd, your G-d, gives you as an heritage to bequeath; you are to erase the memory of Amalek from beneath the heavens. Do not forget.*

4 **Remember** the Golden Calf (*eige1*) (Deut. 9:7): *Remember, do not forget, how you angered the L-rd your G-d, in the wilderness.*

5 **Remember** Miriam (Deut. 24:9): *Remember what the L-rd your G-d, did to Miriam, on the way when you departed from Egypt.*

6 **Remember** the Sabbath (Ex. 20:8): *Remember the Sabbath day to hallow it.*

7 **Remember** Yeshua HaMashiach (2 Tim. 2:8-13): *Remember Yeshua HaMashiach, descended from the posterity of David, resurrected from the dead, according to my Gospel, for which I suffer to the point of being bound as a criminal. But the Word of G-d is not bound. This is why I endure all of this, because of the elect, in order that they also would obtain the salvation which is in Yeshua HaMashiach, with eternal glory. This word is certain: if we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we persevere, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, we shall also be denied; if we are unfaithful, He remains faithful, because He cannot deny Himself.*

You may be seated. Two more points, then onto our play. It is really only one point and it has to do with the first issue I mentioned and promised to come back to. The generational conflict between Amalek and the L-rd, is really a reference to the **spiritual combat** which is being waged around us in every generation of mankind, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. Just because we walk with the L-rd, does not mean will not be bushwhacked along the way, however as long as we walk with the L-rd we will never be defeated as we adopt the strategy He will always provide for us (I Cor. 10:13). These strategies are offensive as well as defensive and the biggest danger in these attacks is their power to remove our focus from the spiritual tasks at hand and to become **reactive belly button gazers** instead of **proactive Kingdom walkers**.

There will always be time to deal with the Amaleks of this life, once the first priorities of our personal spirituality are fulfilled. What are these priorities? They can be described in a variety of ways, but they all refer to our **kingdom focus**. We must remember that we are Heaven bound and that one day all the things of this life will be over and we are truly, with the patriarchs, only **strangers** and **pilgrims**, just passing through on our way home to the House of the L-rd forever. Do not get stuck or sidetracked along the way.

Purim and Shabbat Zachor celebrate our generational victory over the critical sidetracks which the House of Israel has encountered along the way. The seventh remembrance which I have added, refers to the cosmic victory which our Messiah won for us and which is greater than any personal, or generational critical sidetrack which any of the lost sons and daughters of Adam and Eve may encounter as they respond to the what I call: **The E.T. factor**, and I will close with this.

Several decades ago, Steven Spielberg directed a film about a little alien who inadvertently got left behind and who succeeded in being rescued because he was able to send a message home. G-d has sent each of us a personal message and reminds us to keep on calling home for further instructions, until we too, are rescued and can go to our real, forever home.

Have you called home recently? When it comes to prayer, are you a **speed dialler**, or is your hook up slow because you are distracted, either running with your own spiritual Amalekites, or so caught up with the trials and tribulations of this life, that the eternal truths of G-d's Word are **distant fading realities**, which you are paying less and less attention to. What is your life focused on in the long and the short run?

Mishpocah let us proceed into the noisy remembrance of what was intended to be a critical sidetrack, and was turned into the **second massive influx** of Gentile converts into Israel by the courage of an old man and his niece. As we do, let me close by asking you what you are storing up in you life as remembrances – **the victories of the L-rd, or the critical sidetracks which you encounter along the way.** May the noise you make and the joy we celebrate set us free from the false notion that the things of this life are more important than the things of the life which is to come – or that they will ever be allowed to overcome any believers who maintain their kingdom focus and who show true courage under fire. What is this courage? My beloved Messianic Jewish and Gentile E. T.'s, **remember to keep calling home**, because our rescue is on its way and it alone is worth waiting for. **Chag Purim** and **Chag Shabbat Zachor** – **Am Israel chai!**

Amen.