

SAMCHAINU GUIDE TO PARSHAS ZACHOR

A SELECTION OF LAWS & CUSTOMS WITH A FOCUS ON SINGLE MOTHER FAMILIES

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The Shela HaKadosh writes that learning and properly observing the Halachos of a Holiday infuse the Yom Tov with tremendous blessing. Please note that the laws and customs contained in this article follow the Ashkenazi custom.

REMEMBERING AMALEK

The Shabbos before Purim is called “Parshas Zachor”. On this Shabbos, we have the opportunity to fulfill the Torah commandment of remembering the actions of Amalek. What is unique about Amalek that we have a commandment to forever remember and not forget what they did to us? Rashi explains that leaving Egypt and the splitting of the sea were a tremendous inspiration to all the nations of the world at the time. The Torah says that the nations of the world trembled with fear of Hashem. The only nation that was unaffected by the open display of miracles was Amalek, who came to fight against the Jews in the desert. The verse describing the battle says, “אֲשֶׁר קָרַךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ”. Rashi explains the word “קָרַךְ” as “cooled.” Amalek had the audacity to confront the Jews at a time when the rest of the world was overcome with inspiration and fear of Hashem. The Torah explains that this brazenness came from Amalek’s lack of fear of Heaven. This “cooling effect” reversed the awesome impact that the miracles had on the world. An historic opportunity of worldwide recognition of Hashem was lost due to Amalek’s brazen act.

All people have moments in their lives that motivate them to become closer to Hashem. As well-meaning as we are, however, it is difficult to hold on to inspiration. It is our life’s mission to try to overcome the forces that seek to cool off the opportunity to grow. By doing so, we succeed in defeating the spirit of Amalek, and we bring the world closer to universal recognition of Hashem.

THE MITZVAH

The mitzvah of remembering the actions of Amalek is a Torah commandment. This obligation is fulfilled by reading the verses of Amalek on the Shabbos prior to Purim, since Haman was a descendant of Amalek. There are some opinions that women are obligated in the mitzvah. Therefore it is ideal for women to go to shul on the Shabbos preceding Purim to hear the Torah reading. Otherwise, one should read the verses of remembering Amalek from inside a Chumash. (דברים כ"ה: י"ז-י"ט) (Deuteronomy 25:17-19)

May we merit the time when the entire world will know of Hashem, in the days of Moshiach, speedily in our days!